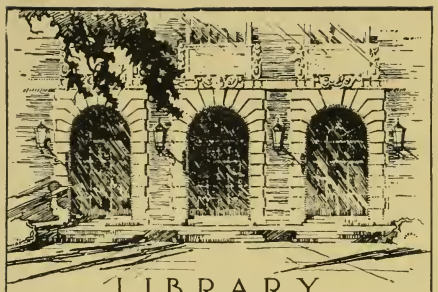

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THE TWO HOMES.

VOL. III.

THE TWO HOMES.

BY

WILLIAM MATHEWS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF VALLIS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE TWO HOMES.

CHAPTER XL.

Edward Graham now assumed the character of a man of action. He was quiet and prompt in his measures. England was his goal, and arrangements for departure from Madeira were soon made. Markwell was astonished at his friend's resolute proceedings. His good services were ever at hand, and Edward availed himself of them in the spirit in which they were tendered. Great, however, was Edward's surprise, when he learned that Markwell intended to accompany him to England.

"Ah!" said Edward, "you have forgotten, Markwell, what you said to me about the fascinations of a certain young tigress."

"I have not forgotten, Graham," rejoined Markwell; "but the case, as you know, is very different. Besides, I do not intend to submit to more fascination than is good for me."

"Dr. A.," said Edward, changing the subject, "will not hear of my leaving before the end of next week, namely, on the 2nd of June. What do you say?"

"Why, that Dr. A. is perfectly right. June is quite early enough for the invalid visitor to leave Madeira for a northern latitude; sometimes a great deal of harm is done by an earlier move. May is not summer in England, nor is June, for that matter; although there is some hope of a thaw in the temperature after the end of May. In all cases, Graham, great care should be taken relative to a removal from a climate like this. Where care is not taken, it often happens that the good of the six or eight months' absence from England is rendered abor-

tive. It is not unusual to notice in the Madeira visitor a strong inclination to set common sense at defiance in this particular. He remains from October until April in a tolerably composed spirit, but no sooner does imagination picture to him the old country with its top-coat unbuttoned, than it becomes almost impossible to prevent him from going home. To notice his anxiety to *get away*—the greater the invalid the more wilful he is on this point; you would think that a vampire had sat upon his shoulders the winter through. He forgets the keen east winds, the chilly night and morning fogs, those beautiful May fogs that feed young toads, and draw up beans; and when the *slight* cold is caught, and the *old* cough comes back, he becomes conscious, as he frets over his lot in the closed room, that he ventured on the alternations of an English spring a little prematurely. There, I have had my say, Graham. So now what will you resolve to do?"

"Go by the packet that sails the day after to-morrow."

"Upon my word, you are English all at once. Ask a friend's advice, and follow your own opinion."

"I must go, Markwell. I wish I could be transmitted by an electric wire."

On the 21st of May, 1847, the friends sailed for England. They left with emotions of lingering love and tender memories; with feelings of gratitude for many social kindnesses, and with an interest in the island that could never be effaced from their hearts. Madeira was Minnie's birthplace—perhaps the last resting-place of her mother? Madeira had given Edward health, the greatest boon that could be conferred upon him in prospect of his new engagements. For Miss Weston, she was happy enough in Edward's restored energies.

As the party from Vigia stood together in a knot on the vessel's deck, they all felt as if leaving a second home.

The packet sailed in the evening. The sun was sinking towards the western horizon and the expanse of mountain was now softly irradiated with its farewell beams. Enchanting was the scene

from the vessel's deck. Strength and beauty, peace and grandeur, were combined in harmony. The glorious mountain-crescent, from the effect of shadows cast upon its broken sides by the rugged glens, seemed bending forward as in a glow of evening adoration. Bathed in the amber hue of sunset, towering aloft into the blue heavens, its sides rent with ravines, where flowed the mountain torrents, and dotted with rustic Quintas and villages half-hid beneath trellises of vine, it presented a spectacle on which the eye could never weary of gazing. Not one of those Quintas, nestling in the bosom of that mountain crescent, concealed in the depth of its ravines, rising on its projecting points, or peeping forth from its chesnut woods or clumps of pines, but might be the ideal dwelling of a poet's dream!

"*Bright, beautiful Madeira!*" said Minnie, in a half whisper as she stood by Miss Weston's side, and gazed with a face of tender melancholy towards the quiet city and the stranger's burial ground. The vessel, favoured by a light breeze from the

land, was gliding onward to the Brazen Head. Minnie did not say, "*Good-bye.*" "*Bright, beautiful Madeira!*" came with a tremulous sigh from her lips, under the light of the evening star.

On the 1st of June, the friends came in sight of the English coast, after a pleasant voyage. The Isle of Wight was the first land seen in the early morning.

Many in that vessel, and Edward was one, had left England some months before, pale, and worn, and downcast; and if not now returning in the full buoyancy of health, their aspect was at least much changed. The bloom was somewhat restored to their faces; hope sat on their brows, and joy sparkled in their eyes.

"Bright, beautiful Madeira!" had once more performed her mission. She had again made happy more than one English home; and still she lies smiling by, ready in a coming season to open her bosom to comfort and to heal.

CHAPTER XLI.

It had been agreed upon between Mr. Ryland and Miss Weston, prior to the departure of the former from Madeira, that the party which first reached Southampton should leave an intimation of the fact with a certain shipping agent. Consequently, on landing, it was Edward's first object to see if he could gain intelligence of their friends. He found that Mr. and Miss Ryland had left Southampton for London the previous week. There was a letter for Miss Weston from Mr. Ryland, in which he communicated the fact that he had taken possession of a furnished house at Kensington, and suggested, with an air of decision, as if he had some authority in the disposal of at least one member of the party—(had his visit to Spain cleared up the doubts touching Minnie's parentage?)—that they

should all proceed direct to his residence, when after-plans could be discussed. To this Miss Weston yielded: she was much troubled at the idea of being separated from Edward. Still she saw the separation was necessary, and consented to it without murmuring. She agreed in Edward's decision, that nothing short of a positive dismissal from his father's roof should prevent his living beneath it. When our friends arrived in London, Markwell, who had accompanied them from Southampton, seemed rather in doubt as to the course he should pursue. His friends were full of concern that they could not offer him a return of that hospitality which he had so generously extended to them while in a strange land.

But what could they do? Edward was not very easy about the sort of reception he would meet with at Grosvenor Square: therefore he dared not offer quarters to even so true a friend! Miss Weston, remembering that Mr. Ryland's sudden departure from Madeira was connected in a certain degree with Markwell, felt a very natural sensi-

tiveness about mentioning Mr. Ryland at all. Except for this she knew a hearty welcome would have awaited him at Kensington, for she believed Mr. Ryland grateful to their common friend for many acts of real kindness and attention during his sojourn in Madeira. But Markwell, calling twelve legions of resolutions to his aid, and resolutely summoning a cab, as they all stood together on the steps of the Waterloo station, said with a glow on his cheek that betrayed inward emotion:

"My best wishes for you all. Not a word, Graham. Some day, some day, my friend, you shall receive me in your own home. I will find you all out in a week or so. And tell Miss Ryland that in losing her society, I have lost one half of my existence:" and Markwell was off.

Mr. Ryland, having received intelligence of our friends coming to Kensington, was in readiness. He met them with earnest and cordial hospitality. Taking Minnie's hand in his, Mr. Ryland drew her aside and beckoned Miss Weston, saying to Edward, "We will join you presently; you will find Ada in yonder room," as he pointed to a door

on the other side of the passage. When Edward was gone, he closed the door of the room they had entered, and taking Minnie in his arms he kissed her affectionately, and saying with an uneven voice, as his eyes rested most tenderly upon her:

"My own! Yes," he added, seeing Miss Weston's agitation, "she is my child. Seaton's daughter died at Gibraltar, and was buried there. Her name was Agnes. There can be no doubt as to whom the little Meninha belongs; and she has been preserved by you, dear madam, to bless us all. Sweet child! your father's heart is too full for words; but tell me, you are happy!"

Minnie hung upon the speaker's bosom, and wept out her grateful thanks to God for having been so merciful and good; but Miss Weston walked about with agitated step, thinking only of poor Edward, and that those words "to bless us all" were a cruel mockery.

"If I could tear away one half of my best nature," she said, gloomily, "I should rejoice; but I cannot; and thus ends my prayer, my hope, my usefulness."

"Not so—not so, dear madam," exclaimed Mr. Ryland; "without you we shall never get on at all."

"All my power of helping is gone," dropped sadly from her trembling lips.

"Not so, surely, can you desert her?" asked the father, with his hand on Minnie's fair brow. Miss Weston seemed to fear to look on Minnie, but Minnie was in her arms in an instant.

"Mamma! mamma!" she panted forth, "ever my dearly loved mamma! You will not part us, father?" The emphasis with which she dwelt upon the last word was full of meaning. Mr. Ryland locked their hands together, and said—

"I will never be guilty of so great a sin. I know all that has been between you. I saw it all the first hour I met you. Good Miss Weston, have a little patience with me. The world has blunted my best feelings, but the love of this sweet girl will recall them to happy life."

"And Edward?" Miss Weston looked these words, she did not speak them. Mr. Ryland understood her.

"That matter," he said, slowly, "is settled in my mind; but of this recent revelation I wish him to be kept in ignorance." Minnie was evidently unconscious of her father's meaning; and as she looked up tearfully into the grave face of her old friend, the latter responded to the touching appeal, and said—

"No, darling! we cannot part. Such love as yours almost consoles me for all that will be. It sinks down to the bottom of my grief."

* * * * *

Ada's delight at this re-union seemed genuine. The unlucky past was sunk in the freshness of present emotion. Her spirits, when the absent trio entered the room, mounted up to happiness. Her face was covered with an eloquent glow, and tears were in her eyes; she kissed Minnie many times, saying—

"Dear little thing! I love you so much!" and proceeded to remove her travelling dress, more than once passing her arm around her neck and gazing into her face with an eye which, for the moment at least, discovered feelings

genuinely sincere. Even Miss Weston met with a kind welcome from Ada. Still Minnie was first with her; and in all this evidence of affection, there was something more vivid, more deep, and more tender, than the majority of the party had ever before witnessed in Ada's intercourse with any one. It was beautiful to behold. She soared at this moment above her old wilful nature. Emotion issued from the sanctuary of that strange soul of an almost overpowering influence. When Markwell's message was given, Mr. Ryland glanced towards Ada with a quick eye, as if to observe the effect of this intimation of his presence in England. But his curiosity did harm; for Ada noticed it, and said in a wilful way—

"I have no patience with anything about Madeira. I have forgotten all about the place and the people. Why does Mr. Markwell come to revive unpleasant memories?"

"Mr. Markwell is my friend, Ada: a very agreeable, good-natured gentleman, whom I very much esteem," observed the father.

"Very well," said Ada, looking indifferently

from the window, "I see a man passing who looks what you say. Shall I call him in and tell him to be our friend? A very good way, papa, to get a friend I should think," and she took Minnie to her room. No sooner had they reached it than the mass of wilfulness was all in a blaze.

"I will not have Mr. Markwell thrust before me. I hate him, Minnie; he is so cynical. I could never tell if he was joking or serious. He had such a way of talking, such keen wit under plain words, that I was always afraid of him. He shall not charm me: he half did so once, when we were riding together. His voice nearly made me love him; but the next day he looked at me and laughed. I hated him, and have done so ever since; I know what papa thinks. I see through all his promises and fair words." Before Minnie could recover her surprise, Ada went on: "I will not bend. It is no use to try it. I will only love whom I like; I will be true to myself, and to ——" but here she stopped, and again commenced. "I will not be trampled upon, take notice, neither by you nor Miss Weston. Papa,

Minnie, says you are my sister. But I do not understand how I can have an English sister. It cannot be; my sister should have my skin, eyes, spirit, Indian nature: you have——well, Minnie, I will not hurt your feelings, but I give you notice you are not my soul's sister. Papa says you are to live here; Minnie you had better not." The sudden change of manner, the sudden warning, took Minnie by surprise. However, she said with a great deal of firmness for her—

"I shall live with my dear papa, Ada; and I hope to contribute to his happiness. He tells me I can; and the assurance affords me great pride and courage. It is *so much*, Ada, to know we can render those we love happy; and my dear friend,"—Ada always laughed when Minnie said "*mamma*," and therefore Minnie, not from *fear* of ridicule, but from a true respect to the dear familiar word, had ceased to use it in Ada's presence—"who has ever been as a beloved mother to me, will do so too. Will you not be pleased with the arrangement, Ada?" Minnie seemed to assume a new character of a sudden.

There was so much quiet firmness, a sort of independence blending with the serious tone, that Ada looked surprised, but still thoroughly defiant.

"The old lady mustn't be encroaching then," was all she said.

This incident was not consolatory to Minnie; but we must return to Mr. Ryland and his companions.

"I perceive a great improvement in the health of more than one of your party, Miss Weston," remarked Mr. Ryland, scanning Edward. "You, Mr. Graham, are double the man you were when I left the island."

"A trip over the mountains and the return voyage have given the finishing touch to my convalescence," answered Edward, with constraint, seeing from Miss Weston's face that something was wrong.

"Your people will have a difficulty in recognising you in Grosvenor Square."

Edward, with excess of sensitiveness, rose and took his hat. His face flushed a little, as he said—

"You remind me of my duty, Mr. Ryland. I should not have come here, but that I thought you would like to speak to me on the subject of the letters we received in Madeira."

"I understand you, and approve your motive, Mr. Graham," answered Mr. Ryland, calmly. "As for letters, they are of little moment. I have seen Mr. Graves two or three times, and have met your old friend Ellis no later than this morning. Ellis, Mr. Graham, is a worthy, methodical man; I like him, and approve of what has been done. Your father's letter will keep; perhaps I need not look into it at all. Yes: you had better seek your father, and let me hint that his house is in strange disorder. Be guarded in your conduct. But your own good sense will guide you."

"For heaven's sake, explain your insinuations," cried Edward, in an impetuous voice, his whole frame thrilling with agitation.

"Mine are barely better than suspicions, Mr. Graham," said Mr. Ryland, kindly, "for Ellis was, even for a trading Londoner, singularly

guarded in his remarks to me. But trust solely to the principles of honour and fine feeling which have guided you in your brief intercourse with me, and perhaps you may do good. I say *brief* advisedly, Mr. Graham, because it takes, in my opinion, ten years, rather than ten weeks, to read the character of a man; and at the end of ten years, it sometimes happens, as I have found, that one week's further insight into it has completely upset the former conclusions. Of course we shall have frequent opportunities of seeing each other, for I shall look in upon you in Mincing Lane; and when you wish to see your relative" (looking to Miss Weston) "you will, I hope, find her here!"

Edward's proud lip curled; a bright flush overspread his brows, but he checked his emotion. The first hard lesson was before him. He must not flinch. Still, to be treated almost as a menial, coolly advised in the authoritative tone of a superior, was hard indeed; and when he looked up from the floor on which his eyes had been fixed, he found Mr. Ryland had left the room. Aunt

Mary only was by him, over whose stern face tears were flowing fast. She took Edward's hand, but could not speak, until he had told her, in his own generous voice, that he had still "hope" to cheer him. With a bitter sigh she answered :

"Then, Edward, go with it to the ruined home. You are his son—his only friend; *I* am nothing now—a poor, weak woman only! Still I have known him in better days, and if I can be of service, send for me. But hasten to your father: broken in reputation and in health, your earnest care and love may yet be his salvation."

"One kind word to *her* from me."

"Yes—yes! and I will tell her of your labours; and we will pray together for you, Edward. God help you, my poor boy! And do not forget to tell your father that Mary Weston is at hand if she can be of service to him."

Edward was gone. Would he ever stand again beneath Mr. Ryland's roof?

CHAPTER XLII.

EDWARD was not long in reaching Grosvenor Square. When his cab drew up at the door of his father's residence, he found a carriage before it. His stepmother got out, accompanied by the Honourable Mr. Kenyon. Edward did not hear the question put to the man in attendance, but he heard the reply:

"Mr. Graham has not yet left home."

Whereupon the Honourable Mr. Kenyon made his adieux. Edward presented himself at the door. On asking, as a matter of form, if Mr. Graham was at home, the prompt answer was, "Not at home," and the door was about to be closed against him.

"You will excuse me," said Edward, passing into the house. Seeing a face in the hall with

which he was familiar, he went up to the man and said, "Harvey, I am glad to see you again."

The man hung back for a minute as if quite confounded. Then, drawing nearer to Edward, he looked at him attentively, and exclaimed—

"Surely, and it is Mr. Edward! Well, I am sure, who ever see the likes of this! It is the young master, who was took to furren parts to die, and here he is, living and 'andsome. I am sure I hope you are very well, Mr. Edward, sir."

"Harvey, I wish to see my father privately," said Edward, in a low voice, "take me to him, and with as little delay as possible. How is your master, Harvey? is he in health?"

"Master is in the library, Mr. Edward. He is not well. He said, did master, to me, not two hours agone, 'Harvey,' says he, 'my good friend, I wish to be alone to-day. If any one should call, except Mr. Slivery and Sir George, say I am engaged—sudden indisposition—anything;' but in your case, Mr. Edward, I makes it exceptional."

As Edward entered the library, his father was

sitting writing at a table, with his back towards the door; nor did he raise his head when Edward entered. Edward stood for the space of a minute by his father's side without speaking, for he felt almost speechless from agitation. That minute's glance revealed to Edward a change in his father's appearance such as he had little contemplated. When he left England, his father was in good health, looking like a man of fifty who bears his years well. Scarcely nine months had passed, and now the face was worn, haggard, drawn; his clothes hung loosely upon him. His lips were moving spasmodically; his brow was frowning, and in that saturnine countenance, at this moment, the stern angry will was dominant. The room was dark; the outer world was dim and frowning; but a cloud over the human soul shrouds and darkens the earth more than a clouded firmament: the spectacle is in the spectator. Edward saw this, and sighed deeply as he observed the change. His lip quivered with emotion as he summoned nerve to bend down over that suffering parent and say:

"Father, do you not recognise me?"

Mr. Graham looked up with a half-frowning face on being thus addressed; but, as if some influence had fascinated him, the expression of his face entirely changed, and his eyes were riveted on his son.

"How!" he said, in a hoarse, shivering voice. "Can this be possible, Edward? And, boy! did you say '*father?*'"

"I said '*father*' with my whole heart," cried Edward, with keen emotion. "Father, you are changed, sadly changed. I cannot tell you how deeply this affects me. Believe that a true son is near you, with health and strength and nerve to serve and comfort you."

"Do you not come to complete my degradation?" said Mr. Graham, with pale and quivering lips.

"Father," said Edward, in a low deprecating voice, "I come to you in the firm determination to stand by you with true faithfulness in your misfortunes, be they great or small. It would avail me little to tell you at this moment all I

feel, my sorrow for you, my hope for better days, and my true aims. Still, father, let me hear that your heart is not quite steeled against me. Let me hope to win your confidence by tender care and faithful service."

"Words! words! I have no faith in any one. I have no right to have faith in you—we have ever been apart in our natures. Leave me to my misery and disgrace."

"Father," said the son, with that thrill of the sincere voice which seemed like an involuntary emotion speaking through it, "you must not mistake me any longer. I have outgrown my waywardness, partially conquered my ill-temper, and desire with heart and life to serve you. I have now health and strength. Allow me to take my place—a son's place—in your house, and share your cares with you." Edward took his father's hand.

"Edward!" the father said, in a low, hollow voice, "you come home at the darkest period of my bitter destiny. You had better leave me. You will then be spared much humiliation."

"If I did, I should merit humiliation, and a self-reproach beyond relief," cried Edward. "Oh, father, let all misconstruction be at an end. A little while, and all will be well. The trial is not so severe as it might have been. We shall soon do well—soon recover the old 'vantage ground, and bring all old comforts back again."

"Alas! Edward, have you anticipated no darker horror than commercial ruin?" said Mr. Graham, in the low, deep voice of suppressed fury. "Comfort! Edward, do you mean to mock me? Leave me—leave me! mourn for me as one dead: for my honour, and credit, and happiness are bankrupt, and there is nothing but shame and anguish left."

Mr. Graham's head sank upon the table, as if the weight of his reflections were too heavy for him. The words now spoken, the latter words especially, and in a voice of such acute misery, caused every nerve of Edward's being to quiver. Mr. Ryland's remark, the singularity of his step-mother's return to the house, flashed across him; and, though perplexed by his gathering fears

and suspicions, he did not divine how much was wrong. His father shortly enlightened him:—

"I was withering in worldly credit," Mr. Graham said, bitterly, and he rose and paced the room with irregular strides, "when your letters came. Still the nature of those demands roused my pride, and induced me to resist them. I was, however, sensible that I had done Ryland wrong; and when my angry feelings cooled, and I came to think it possible that you were animated by the principles you professed, and I had subscribed to the terms enforced upon me, I quietly prepared to effect a curtailment in my household expenditure, in order to advance the object you had in view. No sooner was my intention manifest, than that woman did her utmost to frustrate my plans. My wits were sharpened, or, now that hypocrisy was laid aside, and self stood out in its harsh nakedness, it was easier to see what was actually going on about me. I have every reason to believe that she has dishonoured me."

"Every reason to believe!" said Edward, grasping at the possibility of a doubt, "you should not

condemn, my dear father, on *belief*." Mr. Graham did not heed what he said, but went on passionately:

"For more than three years my name and money have been sacrificed at the shrine of fashion; and now, exposed to public scrutiny, to the sneer of those who will be too happy to humiliate me, I experience the usual fate which follows the downfall of the rich *parvenu*. No sooner did Mrs. Graham discover my embarrassments, than she taunted me with deception, at the very time, as I believe, that she was trampling upon my honour and her own fame. And yet if you were to hear what is said by the people of her set, you would find it to be this: that the *parvenu* in the vain confidence of his newly made position forgot the temptations to which he was exposing his fashionable wife; and *if* such naughty things were true, her gentle birth and breeding had been contaminated by his vulgarity, or her *liaisons* would have been less open! I have been that woman's slave," he pursued, as if bent on aggravating his sense of shame: "Yes! Edward, her slave, her infatuated slave; and behold the recompence! And the worst

pang of all is, that the few whom I respect will think that I partly merit this suffering. This touches my pride to the quick." He threw himself upon a couch distracted almost beyond endurance. Edward knew not what to say. He had come to Grosvenor Square armed with a noble resolution to endure all that his father in his anger would heap upon him; but now he had to be the comforter, and he knew not how. He could only say:

"I wish you would seek a little rest; I will remain by you. When your mind is restored to its usual tone, you will be able to consult your best friends as to what should be done under these circumstances. When a decision is come to, your own emotions will be less painful." Hardly had Edward finished speaking, when the door opened, and Mr. Slivery was announced. He had perhaps heard of Edward's arrival, for he evinced no surprise, although he looked keenly at him.

"Ah!" he said, looking at Edward as if he did not know him, and assuming his blandest air of sympathy, as he stood by Mr. Graham, "sad business! Picked up a word or two in the hall.

Thought you were blind, Graham. Not well to thrust one's fingers into such matters, but Ann did speak to your wife — admonished her, and got no thanks for her pains. Always knew Kenyon to be a scamp."

"Have you no decency, sir? How dare you, unsought, obtrude your coarseness upon my father?" said Edward, sternly.

"Let him prate on, Edward: he speaks of his wife's bosom friend," said Mr. Graham, with a sneer.

"Edward!" exclaimed Mr. Slivery, "are my eyes deceiving me? Edward! upon my honour, you have made brave use of the past nine months."

But Mr. Graham had risen, and now said, bitterly:

"I wanted to see you, to tell you that I am at length aware how very *dear* your acquaintance has been to me. I know your malice: you have been already prating about my wife's conduct: I know you now. Take your false heart and double-dyed hypocrisy somewhere else, you miserable toadeater!"

"Upon my word—upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Slivery, retreating to the door, not relishing, it would seem, Mr. Graham's menacing attitude; "and just at the time I was going to put you in a way to avoid liability in your scrip complications, and without commission! Really, really, the world is very ungrateful. Indeed, Graham, I never expected you would cut up so rough; just at the moment too, if report is to be believed, when you need a friend. But you have one comfort: Elpingstone will stand by you. Elpingstone is a prime fellow to dodge the law."

The door was pushed open. A hand fell on Slivery's shoulder, and an angry voice said:

"If you speak so of me, Slivery, I will send you to a warm lodging at no expense. What! now the hogshead is empty, are you for kicking the outside?" It was Sir George Elpingstone who spoke; but as soon as the new comer caught sight of Edward, his passion disappeared, and he stretched forth his hand with great cordiality. Mr. Slivery slipped away.

"Touch not his hand, Edward!" cried Mr.

Graham furiously, putting Edward back as he was about to accept the proffered welcome. Then fronting his relative, with an air of fierce defiance, he continued, "So you are come at last! It is well you are come! Stay, Edward,"—for the latter was moving away—"and hear what I have to say to this other dear friend of mine;—this friend, Edward, who was so devoutly my obedient servant that he could not exist for twenty-four hours without shaking hands with me, with his imperial air of magnanimity,—he is a scoundrel!"

Edward passed between his father and Sir George.

"Yes! Sir George Elpingstone," cried the excited merchant, shaking his fist, "you are a scoundrel—your character is now thoroughly known to me. Look at that bill for 1,500*l.* You swore you could not get it discounted—that bill to which I attached my name on the promise that two-thirds should be handed over to me. Now it is presented for payment. Have you the money? No! I know you have not, and therefore I tell you, you are a scoundrel. And more, I tell you that, in domesti-

cating yourself under my roof, you have schemed to blast my honour, and to filch me of my money. I wished to tell you this. And now begone! This house is no longer open to you; I command you to leave it for ever!"

At first it was clear, Elpingstone was somewhat surprised at this address; but the mention of the bill appeared to illumine his wits; and, making the best of his position by keeping his temper, he remarked:

"You have no just reason, Graham, for insulting me so grossly."

"You lie! you know I have reason enough. Twist and turn and try to make what you like of it to suit your convenience, you know that if your conscience does not accuse you of being a scoundrel, it is because it is so perverted that it does not distinguish between right and wrong. You know what your sister, my wife, has been doing. You have been a party to all from the beginning. You were the chief person to hoodwink me when Edward told the truth last year. Ah! I have touched you at last, have I? Well, you

have done a brave work, huckstered the trader of his gold, and looked on with complacent eye on the sacrifice of your sister's honour! Why, a common burglar is an honest man in comparison to such as you. Read that,"—tossing a paper towards him. "If you do not know the grounds of my accusation well enough, there are the depositions of an efficient witness. Tear that paper, if you like; it is but a copy. And now my lawyer shall settle the rest. Look here," almost roared the infuriated man; "I am making my will: I have bequeathed my curse to you all; and meant to blow my brains out had not this boy come in. Do you hear me? Take your sister with you. As for you, you shall rot in jail for the moneys you owe me." Whilst Mr. Graham stood panting with fury, Edward endeavoured by mute eloquence of eye and gesture to induce Elpingstone to leave the room, but in vain.

"No, Edward—no!" he said, with cool resolution. "I am a big rogue perhaps, but not a petty one. I meant to meet that bill, but an unlucky spec at Liverpool placed it out of my

power: and so I won't leave the room until I have told your father that I would have stuck to him to the last, but for this—for this." His blue eyes flashed malice, as he drew himself up, and, looking over Edward to Mr. Graham, said—"Think of all this to-morrow, Mr. Graham. Don't do things in a hurry. Have a regard for the house. What will the world say? Now you are going down the ladder, a hundred will kick you on who would have borne you on their shoulders, ladder and all. Take my advice, conceal your domestic *faux pas*. If Emily has been a little indiscreet, though I cannot believe she has, it has been your fault; and a man of your years should overlook little indiscretions in a fashionable wife. Let me tell you, Mr. Graham, men in your position are compelled to do so very often. Cannot you remember how you used to chuckle over the secret histories of matters of this sort when I amused you with them? Why, Mr. Graham! every innuendo I indulged in should have been a warning to you; but, no! As long as I chirped about your friend's wife's

weaknesses, you were highly amused; but no sooner does some silly act on the part of your own wife make you suspicious, than out comes the fury of your vulgar soul upon my luckless head." Elpingstone was going away, but suddenly turning on his heel, he added: "As to lawyers, Mr. Graham, don't trouble them. Don't fling good money, if you have it, after bad. The last venture at Liverpool has dipped me, and before the cleverest limb of the law this side the Styx could get up the forms to catch me, I shall be in South Africa herding with *native* bears. I am sick of those beasts on 'Change."

"You are a cold-blooded hypocrite," cried Mr. Graham, boiling with fury; and he sprang past, before Edward could interfere, evidently intending to commit personal outrage on his brother-in-law. But not observing in his passion a large footstool in his way, he fell headlong over it, and lay to all appearance stunned or dead.

An expression of concern came over the

frowning face of the gay Elpingstone, and he made a step forward to render assistance; but he checked the impulse, closed the paper that had been given to him, and left the room, saying—

"A miserable state of things this! Very imprudent of Emily. I feared it; but *I* had no hand in it, as Kenyon will find out. Not so bad as that." Elpingstone called his man and said, hurriedly—

"Take a cab, and fetch Dr. Ashton; and, Marshall, be silent about it. When you return, endeavour to get speech of young Mr. Graham, and tell him I shall call in an hour, in hopes of being able to speak to him."

"Yes, Sir George; but, Sir George, Mrs. Graham is so anxious to see you."

"Mrs. Graham must wait, Marshall. I am off to the Carlton. And, Marshall, see my pistols are ready to-night; you understand."

"Perfectly, Sir George. Dr. Ashton, first; Mr. Graham, junior, second; Mrs. Graham; and pistols." Marshall went off highly impressed with the importance of his duty.

Edward devoted his whole energies to the relief of his father. He had been severely stunned. His head had come in contact with a claw of the library table, and had received a heavy bruise above the left eye. As soon as he was restored to partial consciousness, Edward moved him to a sofa; and sitting down by him, held his hand, and watched with keen anxiety for a more positive evidence of recovery. Scarcely half-an-hour had passed, when, just as Edward thought he could safely leave the room to despatch a messenger for Dr. Ashton, that gentleman entered.

"I was about to send for you," Edward whispered, after a very cordial greeting on both sides.

"Indeed! Why, Elpingstone's man came in hot haste. How the fellow drove me back!"

"Elpingstone sent for you, Ashton! But now, for Heaven's sake, let us see what can be done for my poor father."

Mr. Graham had not spoken since the accident; still his intellect seemed rather benumbed than lost.

"A bad accident this! I wonder if the bubble has burst. We must use the lancet. Yes! yes! just change his position: that will do! Get a basin, Edward." A vein was opened, and after a little while, Mr. Graham's faculties partly recovered themselves. At Dr. Ashton's suggestion a large sofa couch was converted into a bed, and when the patient was placed thereon, and the domestics had left the room, the doctor remarked:

"This must be your charge to-night, Edward; and remember, no excitement, or we shall have some ugly symptoms to contend with. Tell me all about this. Fortunate you came home so opportunely."

Edward, without hesitation, explained all that had come to his knowledge the last hour or two, in as few words as possible.

"This is a bad business, Edward," said Dr. Ashton, in a guarded voice; "a very bad business. I saw it from the first, even before your brave attempt to remedy it last spring. But, remember, I do not believe that *their* conduct has been positively criminal in the eyes of the law. She is too selfish, too much mistress of herself, for that. I

knew Emily Elpingstone before she married your father. Our profession reveals strange facts to us, Edward; and we often see that acts of selfish, heedless vanity are more destructive of connubial happiness and respectability than positive guilt. Now, how must you act towards her? Let it be prudently, and, compatibly with honour, generously. There have been faults on both sides. Women are adaptable creatures when treated kindly, but your father's petty tyranny, his morose disposition, made it impossible for a gay woman of spirit to make a companion of him. Your father selected the last woman in the world he ought to have married."

Edward's face was very grave; and as he remained silent, his companion changed the conversation.

"So Markwell has come over with you, Edward? I am very pleased: the introduction was serviceable. He is a good fellow. I hope to see him shortly. He must take care though, for he has extensive organic disease of the heart!"

"I can hardly think so," said Edward, "with

all proper deference to your professional ability. He walks for miles, or hours rather, over hill and mountain. He seems quite a stranger to physical infirmity."

"Organic disease in the *left* lobe of the heart," repeated Dr. Ashton, with emphasis.

"The *right* lobe, you mean, Ashton," replied Edward; "and if it does no more harm to others than to him, one would wish the disease capable of extension."

There came a tap at the door, and Edward received a message that Sir George Elpingstone requested to see him. Edward decided, after a few moments' reflection, upon complying with the summons, and begged Dr. Ashton to await his return.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"SHAKE hands, my boy!" cried Sir George Elpingstone, in an excited voice, as Edward entered the room.

"We meet under very painful circumstances," Edward said, as he withdrew his hand from the grasp of his companion.

"We do, Edward, but not so bad as your father intimates. Upon my word, I am fair with you. I have just seen Kenyon. To satisfy me, he pledges his honour to the non-existence of criminality between him and Emily. The paper your father holds by, touches, I find, solely upon some silly acts of familiarity. Kenyon always had a foolish way of toying with a woman's hand, and going to the verge of what society calls improprieties, when it is obliged to speak; but I always

knew there was more vanity than feeling in this folly with him, and Emily, too, if I must speak truly. Therefore, Edward, you must aid me to smooth things over a little, so as to avoid exposure. It would be most unwise for you to act upon your father's convictions, or take any steps to increase the difficulties in the case."

"The past cannot be recalled," rejoined Edward; "but you must excuse my saying that you have pursued a policy in this house which, under any circumstances, were most unnatural; and now that you see comfort, respectability and happiness destroyed, you cannot be blind to the reason why such a lamentable state of things exists."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sir George, with a sneer, "the gold in the best of us has a mixture of alloy."

"I do not wish to refine with you, Elpingstone, upon the subject of moral responsibilities," observed Edward, quietly; "and I promise you, in the event of my father's not being able to substantiate the charge he has brought against his wife, I will do my best to reconcile matters be-

tween them; but if the charge is proved——" Edward paused.

"Well, Edward?" cried Elpingstone, a little impatiently.

"I will do my utmost to temper the indignation, which, in such situations, too often associates revenge with justice."

Elpingstone looked with an eye of ridicule on his companion; and then, nettled to find his own cheek colour under Edward's quiet scrutiny, he said—

"You are mighty generous, and kind, and considerate, and all that sort of thing, you know; but I may as well tell you that after what has passed, Emily wishes for a separate maintenance. The world may be given to understand that the separation arises from incompatibility of temper."

"And left to judge between that and Mr. and Mrs. Slivery's insinuations," suggested Edward.

"I will break Slivery's false neck, if he but snores or dreams a word upon the matter, We had best settle it as I say."

"I can settle nothing," answered Edward, "although I fairly tell you I will call things by their right names when the subject comes to be discussed; but as I have not formed an opinion, even if I had power to act——"

"You do nothing here? What nonsense! A domestic Napoleon with the diplomatic skill of a Talleyrand! What? have you not toppled us all down—your father, Emily, and me? Do you think, Edward—" and Elpingstone looked into his companion's face with a scrutinizing eye, "that I, with my knowledge of life, cannot see through your secret arrangements with Ryland? The money saved—and the daughter gained."

"The daughter!" cried Edward, with absolute agony of eagerness, entirely thrown off his guard.

Elpingstone appeared to enjoy Edward's agitation. Contemplating him with a satirical sort of curiosity, he said:

"Yes, Edward—the pretty Minnie. But I forget, I suppose it is a part of the *ruse* to profess ignorance. Still Granny Wolf knew it, I am sure; and so did you, Slyboots. Gad! Edward,

you are deep—very deep. Were I not George Elpingstone, I would be Edward Graham."

Edward was deeply touched. He was not angry, for the feeling was too deep for anger. He said, in a low broken voice—

"Elpingstone, do not taunt me in my distress. Before we part, and that for ever, let there be a few words of frankness and true feeling from me to you. You have oftentimes since our ill-starred connection treated me with kindness; erratic kindness, I confess, but still kindness; and for many generous thoughts, with which in days long past you relieved the peevish invalid, I would have you think I am not unmindful, now circumstances are somewhat changed. As a proof that I am sincere with you, I would not have you think me the base selfish thing you seem to suppose me. I made no terms, Elpingstone, with Mr. Ryland; I told him that my father had not been so faithful as he should have been to the trust reposed in him; I told him I feared he would lose his money, unless something prompt was decided on. I had formed my plans; I asked

him to let me strive to do my best to turn the tide of events, and to give me his aid. You, no doubt, saw my letter to my father; as I wrote, I felt, and feel, as God judgeth me. Before that letter was despatched, Mr. Ryland—who had discovered the state of my feelings towards her whom you have mentioned, and who waited the receipt of a packet from Mrs. Graham which was to clear up, it was presumed, the doubts which rested on his connection with Miss Seaton—tested my sincerity as to the position I sought in these business affairs most cruelly; and, as he was satisfied that I meant honourably, others I am sure, ought to be——"

"The test, Edward? You speak like truth. I will believe you."

"I said that I would sacrifice the *best* hope of my life to prove to him the sincerity of my aim. He took me at my word, demanded the relinquishment of that *one* hope, and he holds me to my bond."

"Ah! that is, I opine, if Minnie turns out to be his daughter?"

"I read it thus; such I understood to be the nature of my engagement; and I have reason to believe he will take early steps to recover the packet Mrs. Graham so strangely retains."

Elpingstone drew a packet from his pocket, and, holding it towards Edward, although he held it firmly in his hand, said with emphasis, thinking, perhaps, he was doing a very generous thing:

"Edward, I brought this packet here to make hard terms with you—no matter what. I held a prize, and I was resolved on making use of it. Now, my boy, this is the packet Ryland wants; and since he has gone upon my old plan of worrying you and dear little Minnie half to death, I will at least do you both one good turn —strip Ryland of his authority over you—there!"

Walking up to the lamp, he held the packet over it, and set it in a blaze. Edward sprang forward, and tried to seize the burning papers; but Elpingstone held them there, until nearly every particle of the packet was consumed by the blaze.

"Now, Edward! off to Ryland, and snap your fingers in his face."

Edward was deeply agitated, his cheek burnt, his frame shook; he sank into a chair, and clasped his hands upon his brow. For at least five minutes he remained in this attitude. God only knew what was going on within his brain; what impulse was doing with honour, and heart with reason! At last he rose to his feet. His face was very pale, but the expression was that of honourable resolution.

"I must report this proceeding, Elpingstone," he said; "the act goes very far to prove all that Mr. Ryland wished. In honour, I must not conceal the circumstance from him."

"As you like, Edward. Upon my word, it is a hard matter to please you. I have put Ryland *hors de combat*. If you like to lift him on his legs again to renew the fight, you deserve your fate."

Edward left the room without another word; for he was not in a mood to continue the conversation. On his way to the library, much to

his surprise, Edward encountered Mrs. Graham. Her dress was ruffled, her hair in disorder, and her face gave unmistakeable evidence of tears. She had her child in her arms; and, hastening up to Edward, she said, as she held his little brother out to him—

"Save him, Edward! you have the power, save him and me!"

She uttered no word of recognition. She had not seen him before, but she had seen her brother, and she knew how matters stood. Possibly she was too much frightened, too agitated, to act in any other way. Edward thought only of relieving distress. Had his stepmother been ten times more guilty than he believed her to be, he would have acted as he did now. He took the child in his arms, kissed him tenderly, and looking into the mother's face, saw an expression there he had never seen before, and said with earnest kindness—

"I will be your friend, and you will be your child's."

"I will be, Edward, if you will save us from

this shame. Oh, Edward! those wretched servants! it is all revenge! I swear to you it is. You will not desert us?"

She stood imploringly—the dark, handsome face withered by fear, the fear of the woman for the loss of her reputation, and the reflex of that loss upon her innocent child.

"I will not desert you," Edward answered, returning the child to her; "but you must take care to act at present so as not to let the domestics suppose that anything has happened to disturb the usual course of things."

Mrs. Graham thanked him for the hint, said again she would rely upon him, and glided away to her apartment.

Elpingstone stood in the doorway watching his sister. When she had disappeared, he muttered—

"I knew the girl had a heart. All women have, when they have little articles like that in their arms. You could not resist him, Master Edward; inexplicable as you are to me, Emily understands you. Now to my own affairs. Have

at you, Ryland! There is a bird left in your aviary that will hie to my chirp, or I am much mistaken."

Returning to the library, Edward told his friend all that had passed, and then solicited his good offices, in going to Kensington with an account of matters as they stood; for he knew there would be no rest that night for his aunt, unless she heard from him. Dr. Ashton consented, saying—

"You are right, Edward; I will do your bidding and see Ryland too. But upon my word, Elpingstone, in his way, meant to do you a service in destroying the packet. Yes! yes! I will go to Kensington, explain matters in my prosy way, and let you hear from me before midnight."

According to his promise, the worthy doctor wrote as follows:—

"Dear Edward,

"If the patient is uneasy, apply a mustard-plaster to the nape of the neck, and send for

me. If quiet, leave me alone. A court-martial has been held upon you; Aunt Mary president; so I need not tell you the verdict. Markwell came in: he had forgotten to deliver up a lace shawl he was charged with for Miss Ryland, made by the girls in Madeira, they tell me; and he robed the young Indian in it, and really —but there, I am an old bachelor, you know, and mustn't get into the superlative. Is Markwell going to plunge into 'Loch *Foyle?*' It looks like it.

"Ever yours,

"P. Ashton."

But the envelope contained two notes. The second was as follows:—

"Dear Sir,

"I congratulate you on retaining right thoughts, and command of right principles, under great temptation.

"Yours faithfully,

"Wynne Ryland."

"My dear Edward,

"You have acted like yourself. Need I assure you of my entire sympathy. I will be with you in the morning.

"Yours very affectionately,

"Mary Weston."

Through the night, Edward kept a careful watch by his father's side. He laid aside his own personal cares, and devoted all his attention to those of his parent.

Once during the night Mr. Graham appeared conscious. He sat up in his bed and looked about him, with a bewildered, frowning glance.

"Father!" said Edward, simply, placing his hand in his—

"My head! my arm! what is this? I dreamt I had been waylaid by that rascal Slivery, and left for dead by the roadside."

"You have had a fall, father! you have been very ill. Dr. Ashton has been here and has taken a little blood from you. And I am sitting by you to see you are not disturbed."

"I ought to be grateful, Edward; and I am."

"It is I who am grateful, father," said Edward, earnestly.

The father's and the son's eyes met. Through the film of sickness, and partial mental bewilderment, came a light that Edward had never seen in his father's face before. Edward *felt* one with his father from this moment. He was comforted and strengthened, without a word having been spoken.

"God bless you, Edward! keep *them* from me," fell from the sufferer's lips. Then his head sank again, and the incoherent remarks that followed revealed that the intellect was once more isolated from the communications of the senses.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"YOUR painful task has been so far successful," said Miss Weston to Edward, as they sat together at breakfast in Grosvenor Square, a month after the events recorded in the last chapter.

"I did my best to narrow the neutral ground between them," answered Edward, "and really she was very grateful when I parted from her at Dover yesterday."

"Of course she was; your services were inestimable to her in her position. To appear in public with your father and yourself, receiving from you every kind attention, was the best contradiction that could be given to that man's malignant reports" (Miss Weston alluded to a servant who had, after Mrs. Graham discharged him,

given Mr. Graham the intelligence which led to so much trouble) "and the Slivery's insinuations. Did she propose going to Paris?"

"No!" said Edward, "it was my proposition. Whilst my father is in his present wretchedly nervous state, I feared asperities would arise which I might find it difficult to soften. Absence for a time I thought best for her and him. He will come to miss her when he sees the child; and this sort of feeling does more, I suspect, to restore good-will than active intercession. Then I had another reason for inducing her to take advantage of her relative's invitation."

"Yes?"

"Well the fact is, household retrenchment must commence—I explained this necessity to her. When she found I was resolved to carry out my plans, she said, 'Get Miss Weston to take my place, and, pray, let it be all accomplished by my return?' This was a grateful suggestion; for I am now in a position to spare her feelings, and have the co-operation of your experience."

"That, such as it is, is of course at your service."

After a pause, Edward resumed. "I feel a sort of undefined charm in having been able to render my stepmother good service. I hope it is not altogether the selfish satisfaction of having done right."

"You have surpassed me, Edward. I could not have acted as you have done in this business without at least speaking a little more of my mind."

"Still you think I did well in not being vindictive?" said Edward, archly.

"Of course you did; but you know woman-nature is woman-nature."

"You are probing me," cried Edward, cheerfully; "for none knows better than yourself that nature speaks the same language in man as woman when her best instincts are appealed to."

Breakfast was ended, and Edward was preparing to depart for Mincing Lane, when his aunt came up to him; and putting her hand upon his shoulder, said, with the old tender smile—

"I must tell you what Mr. Ryland says to all this. He said yesterday, as I was leaving him, after I had told him what you had done: 'Such

conduct fascinates my heart, but humiliates my pride.'" Edward's face beamed with sudden pleasure.

"Always kind!" he said with emotion; "from the hour you drew me, a peevish boy, from St. John's Wood to Alegria, always good, always kind!"

"Speaking of Alegria, Edward," said Aunt Mary, replying to Edward's remark only, with glistening eyes, "you must drive me down to Eling the first day you have to spare. I *will* have you take a run into the country now and then to keep nature green. Besides the old squire will feel slighted, as he told me when I saw him last week, if you do not pay him a visit; and he declares if you do not join him at least once a week in the coming season in a joyous tallyho, he will never forgive you. And, Edward, Mr. Ryland"—here Aunt Mary looked provokingly confidential—"has begged permission to enlarge *our* stalls to accommodate his horses, as he means to hunt with the old squire."

"Therefore, I cannot have the pleasure," rejoined Edward, rather quickly.

"Well—really now!" But what Aunt Mary's exclamation really meant I cannot say, for she was interrupted in her sentence by Mr. Graham's entrance. He looked ill and peevish. Within the past month, he had grown much older in appearance. Miss Weston placed an easy chair for him, and said—

"We did not wait breakfast, because of your message."

"I did not mean to get up to-day, but I cannot lie in bed; that's why I am here," answered Mr. Graham, a little irritably. Then he laid his head back and closed his eyes.

"If you could accompany me to Mincing Lane to-day, I should be glad," Edward said, standing by his father's side. Mr. Graham did not speak for a while, or open his eyes. At last he said—

"I cannot go to Mincing Lane to-day, nor to-morrow, nor ever again, I think. Do you think I have no feeling, Edward? you can do without me! I am nobody. You have both got it your own way now."

Edward was about to speak, but Aunt Mary

held up her finger, admonishing silence, and they left the room together.

"I shall be absent till the evening," Edward said, as he stood in the hall.

"I shall be at home all the morning, and will cheer your father up as well as I can," said Miss Weston. "In the afternoon, I must pay dear Minnie a visit. She feels her position a strange one."

"Yes?" Edward said, as if questioning. "She was very earnest about my coming here, when I told her you said you were in need of me; but I must look in upon her daily. Ada is struggling hard to gain a supremacy over her; but Minnie feels she is *elder* sister; and though she trembles at her responsibility as such, her gentle nature is gradually acquiring, under her new character, the fuller developments of womanhood."

"You must feel the separation," observed Edward gravely, and with constraint.

"Yes! but I could not bring her here, Edward; although Mr. Ryland did give us 'carte-blanche' in the matter."

"Indeed—indeed!" exclaimed Edward, with a sudden revival of his old impetuous spirit; "gave you 'carte-blanche,' did he? you confound me. Allow Minnie to live under this roof, although he has not the generosity to ask *me* to cross his threshold?"

"Edward, Mr. Ryland told you in my presence you could visit Kensington when you liked."

"Yes: to see you!"

"Well, Edward! should he have said to see himself, or his family, and have put me in the back-ground? He recognised my claim to you. This instanced right feeling, and delicacy too. Still, you never came near us!"

"But he says that *more* than friends *we* can never be."

"And remarks, too, Edward, that you deserve a better and a brighter fate. Come, Edward, bear a brave heart for yourself as well as for others; few appreciate the value of your character more than Mr. Ryland. You really must not be so sensitive. It was only yesterday that Mr. Ryland regretted

that you possessed such keen emotions and fastidious sensitiveness."

No true man would quarrel with me on such grounds, at such a time." Although Edward spoke thus, his cheek burnt with pleasure.

"Then would you have me reverse my decision relative to Minnie?" asked Aunt Mary.

"Bring Minnie *here?* Of course not. This is no place for her. Certainly not."

"Well then, Edward, what can be done for you?" asked Miss Weston, with a little playfulness.

"Honestly, I wish we were at Alegria, and as we were before these strange arrivals among us. Our intercourse with the Rylands has been unsatisfactory. He meets me with half-confidence, half-mistrust. A lukewarm regard I detest. And Ada is mad; and they will make Minnie mad, and you and me, and there will be an end on't. But for Mincing Lane, I should not have patience to live."

"Come, Edward, this is unlike you," exclaimed Aunt Mary, opening the door for him. "There,"

she said, as the fresh air of early morning blew pleasantly about them, "there is something practical in the very feel of the English atmosphere."

"If it be so, it is well, for we must work," said Edward, as he stepped into his cab.

"No word to Kensington?"

"Yes, what you will. It—it is your fault though, if I ought not."

CHAPTER XLV.

Towards the afternoon, Miss Weston, accompanied by the nurse and Mrs. Graham's little boy, left Grosvenor Square for Kensington. It was a summer afternoon in August, soundless, breathless—an afternoon for *siesta* and dreaming. Miss Weston found her friends luxuriating beneath the branches of a large copper-coloured beech-tree, which stood in the centre of the lawn. Minnie was upon her feet in an instant, and so was our old friend Nep, whom Minnie had brought from Alegria the week previous. The little Percy was instantly Minnie's and Nep's particular charge. Ada, in a flowing white dress, lay perfectly still upon a couch she had made of gorgeous Indian shawls. Ada was at times absolutely indolent; but she

indulged her indolence after her own Indian fashion, and the fashion was very charming.

Although so young, she was already expanding into the graceful woman. Not so Minnie. She was still a girl, in the finest acceptation of the term; wrapt in an atmosphere of grace, and health, and youth. Mr. Ryland brought a wicker-chair—a Madeira importation—and placed Miss Weston in it.

"This is indeed pleasant," exclaimed Miss Weston, "after the hot streets," and she looked at Ada.

"I do not like *pleasant* always," answered Ada, listlessly. "I wish the fates would present us with an earthquake. England is such an uninteresting country; not a mountain, or a tornado: nature flat, with her hair combed straight, as some American says. Minnie, I want that child. Bring him here, Nep." Nep was about to obey. Even when Minnie held up an admonishing hand, he looked wilful.

"I think Percy would rather stay with me, Ada," Minnie said with a little authority, as if she

felt Percy had a peculiar claim upon her, or she upon him.

"We will see," Ada rejoined. "I have given you proof of my authority over Nep."

"Oh! there is a mystery in that. Nep does not mean to be unfaithful. If you make any more efforts to charm him away from me, I must really send him back to Alegria."

"At your peril!" replied Ada, emphatically. Then bending forward to the child, she looked at him as tenderly as eyes could look, and held out her arms. The little fellow seemed puzzled for a minute; then, as the arms were still extended, he positively crawled off to her, whilst Nep rebelliously lent him assistance by a pull at his clothes. As Ada now sat up and made a seat for the child in her lap, he took hold of one of her large hoop earrings and tugged at it lustily. Ada said never a word, although the pain must have been great. She simply released the child's hold, kissed him, and gave him a band of her hair to play with. Whilst Ada was thus occupied, and Mr. Ryland and his guest were chatting, Markwell appeared

upon the lawn. Ada's singular and happy way of enchanting the child's attention surprised him.

"You make him happy," he said, in a low voice, "and the pleasure is shared between you, as the roses on the faces of both testify."

Ada looked pleased. A compliment from Markwell was very unusual; and she was rather sensitive about her complexion; it contrasted so strangely with Minnie's.

"Dear child!" she said, looking half-confidentially into Markwell's face. "He knows what makes him happy; I do not think *we* are always so sagacious."

Markwell looked surprised. The remark was unlike Ada's usual mode, and was uttered naturally.

"I fear not. Children have the advantage of us in this art. *We* are often under the influence of delusion; *they* are under that of nature. We must go back in life to learn truth. And the boy loves you!" He patted the cheek of the little fellow.

"Oh! I get on very well with children and dogs," cried Ada, in her old odd way. "There

is an innate likeness between us: the only things, I think, that have any sympathy with me."

"You cannot think how *little I* feel," said Markwell, laughing. "I have been in Mincing Lane all the day, and I am humbled. I thought myself somebody in Madeira: but this bustling, intelligent, myriad-eyed, practical London makes me sensible of my individual insignificance."

Markwell now joined in conversation with the rest of the party, walking backward and forward before them as he talked—a way of his. Markwell appeared on more frank and open terms with Mr. Ryland and his family than might have been expected after all that had passed. The truth, however, was, that on a little reflection, Mr. Ryland had resolved to take the present as it came—his old Indian way, the way of a hot latitude. The English climate and the tax-gatherer make a man think. Little by little the sort of restraint which had existed was worn away by custom, and he became a familar and expected guest.

Whilst Markwell continued to pace backwards

and forwards before the party, Ada sent little Percy to Minnie, and getting up from her couch, leant against the trunk of the tree under which her friends were seated, and listened to the conversation.

"So you have been spending the day in the city?" said Mr. Ryland to Markwell. "Does Mr. Edward Graham's heart seem still in the work? Look every day for a sudden collapse, brought about by your friend's disgust at some imaginary offence. I have heard nothing of him for a week—scarcely for a month, except a scrawl, hardly legible, now and then, reporting progress."

"You know"—Aunt Mary got so far, then her face flushed, and she laughed grimly. Markwell took up the word:—

"You know his leisure time has been well employed of late."

"Oh! his notes, if I could read them, are very respectful, very correct, very sensible, no doubt," said Mr. Ryland, apparently with some pique.

"We should *scrawl* wholly unintelligibly, I

opine," exclaimed Markwell, stopping in his walk and facing Mr. Ryland, "if we had his work on our shoulders. When I am in Mincing Lane, and for hours afterwards, I can scarcely think a thought but in admiration of Edward Graham." Minnie's face was hid in the child's bosom; but it was evident that she was listening, for her prattle, which had been going fast, was suddenly hushed.

"Well but, Markwell, about the work: that is what most concerns *me*. I really want your candid opinion," said Mr. Ryland.

"Oh! then you shall have it. I have observed Graham from the first."

"Call him by his Christian name, if you please," suggested Mr. Ryland.

"Well then," continued Markwell, with a fleeting frown, "I have observed Edward from the first; and I tell you he far exceeds all I expected of him, and that was a great deal. His calm, earnest manner, the firmness of his proceeding when judgment has decided a point, the clearness of his orders, his punctuality in engagements, all these have obtained for

him the respect and ready service of those with whom he is daily brought in contact without and within the house. One spirit animates the whole machinery of the concern, and the one aim is the restoration of the respectability of the firm. Ellis tells me that there is a great difference between the past and present management, that Edward possesses an intuitive quickness of business-judgment which is equal to experience."

"Very unlikely to last, I think," observed Mr. Ryland. "I cannot think that he is either physically or mentally calculated to meet the necessities of practical activity."

"To the worldly it would appear so; but I believe Edward Graham—Edward, I beg pardon, —will conquer. It is quite wonderful to see one who used to be so nervous that he blushed and trembled at the approach of a stranger, suddenly enabled, through improvement in health, and the calls of honour, to suppress those feelings which tended to paralyse the healthy action of his intellect, and to plunge into the bewildering torrent of affairs."

"That is all your theory about him. You make a Bee-*King* of him, as Goethe puts it."

"Theory is it, Mr. Ryland?" cried Markwell, stopping suddenly before him and speaking rapidly. "Pray, go to Mincing Lane. Go over the premises with Edward, as I have done, day after day. See how readily his orders are understood; the way in which they are appreciated by very practical heads; the interest with which he is listened to, and which he inspires on his own personal account: listen to the few well-chosen words which fall to the lot of him whose duty has been well performed; note how he seems to hold the reins of every department, and to produce a harmonious movement of the whole: — do this, and you will say no more about the young man's theories, but be astonished at the success of his practice."

"I think you go too fast," answered Mr. Ryland, with provoking coolness; "and I think it may be said in Mr. Edward Graham's case, that circumstances and fortune have happily aided him in his experiment."

"No, Mr. Ryland," cried Markwell. "Fortune, bah! I have a repugnance to the term—a *diablerie* belonging to the ventriloquism of humbug. Edward's *fortune*, if you really like the term, Mr. Ryland, is to think right, and act up to it. Had he not acted honourably towards you, you would not have acted generously, nor, allow me to say, sensibly, towards him and his. His rectitude saved his father's credit, and promised fair to save your money."

Miss Weston was still silent, but her face spoke eloquent thanks to Edward's determined champion. Mr. Ryland was either out of humour, or inclined to test Markwell to the core.

"I must maintain, in spite of your enthusiasm, Markwell, that Mr. Edward Graham is not constitutionally calculated to succeed in the task he has marked out for himself. At present success is the aërial prospective of excited imagination."

"The mind that feels vividly," replied Markwell, "the sensitively toned and generous heart, is pre-eminently nature's brightest conception.

We acknowledge its nobility; the most hardened and worldly are conscious of its beauty in the abstract; and when such a man acquires the resolution to act upon the promptings of his noble and silent thoughts, brings common sense to regulate the kindly impulse, there is a loveliness blended with the strength of his character which wins the weak and controls the strong. The Hero-subject of Nature sits by her throne and rules in her right."

Mr. Ryland rose, saying—

"You play with our emotions, without satisfying our judgments. The transition you speak of is unnatural. Such argument is in place in Madeira, but not in practical London. The only *bright* thing London does not quarrel with, is a sovereign fresh from the Mint."

Markwell had the good taste to be silent. He saw, as Mr. Ryland bent a scrutinizing eye upon Minnie, that she had been weeping; and as Ada sprang forward to rescue Percy from Nep, who was busily occupied in pulling him backwards by his clothes along the lawn, she said to Mark-

well (for she, too, had noticed Minnie's emotion)—

"You are half as good as Nep. Not a word has bitten me, nor papa; although he does not seem to agree with you. I know his face. Where did you lose the big bones out of your temper?" Markwell laughingly responded to Ada's humour; and they were shortly at the further end of the lawn, doing their best to all appearance to make Percy and Nep behave as naughtily as possible.

"Poor Ada! I am in such trouble about her," said Minnie to Miss Weston, and her tone harmonized with her words.

"What is the matter, Minnie?"

"*He* has found out our residence. I have wanted to tell you so ever since you have been here; only Mr. Markwell's kind words distracted my attention."

"Sir George Elpingstone, Minnie?"

"Yes!" I saw him in a policeman's dress. I am sure I am not mistaken; and he was speaking to Ada as she stood by the wall yonder that looks into the road. I am almost certain I saw him give

her something—a letter I think. What shall I do?"

"When was this, dear Minnie?"

"Last evening—shortly after you and papa left us. If you remember, Ada was uneasy, and seemed anxious to avoid our society. Poor Ada! I see she is suffering."

"You must tell your father at once, Minnie. He is coming this way. Speak to him yourself. There is nothing like candour and personal communication in matters of difficulty." Mr. Ryland came near, and Minnie told him what she thought and feared in a very agitated way.

"Do let us go to Alegria, dear papa," she said in conclusion.

"Circumstances compel me," said Mr. Ryland, evidently much troubled, "to remain in London a little longer, Minnie: a month or two: and then we will go back to India. I fear I was wrong in attempting to transplant poor Ada from her native soil. I was in hopes, it has been my prayer that our friend yonder——but no good comes of my hopes. Thank you, dearest, for telling me."

Mr. Ryland passed on to the house, with his head bent low.

"To India?" faltered Minnie, with a quivering sigh, as she looked up into her friend's face. Miss Weston echoed, "*To India!*" As Minnie seized her hand convulsively, the poor lady lost her fortitude, and wept.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"ACUTE sensibility! my good aunt. You really do not give me credit for the virtue of my self-denial." So said Edward to Miss Weston a few evenings after Mr. Ryland's threat to go back to India, and take Minnie with him.

"What! will you not break through this reserve if they really prepare to leave for India?"

"I have never spoken to you, my dear aunt, of my feelings in regard to Minnie. When I first loved Minnie, we were children; when she first knew my affection, I was scarcely a man; and so much to agitate and perplex us has intervened, that I have scarcely known the true character of my position. Enough that, as I read Mr. Ryland's decision, *we* are separate. You cannot know the torture this fact occasions me. I speak as a man who

knows his mind. I love her, more dearly perhaps than ever because she appears to be lost to me. To give up this affection is impossible. It has grown up with me from my boyhood; it will go with me to my grave. Why am I so calm? I will tell you. Over all my secret grief, there is inward pride of being able to prove to *her* and to her father that at least I am not altogether unworthy of her. Such has been the pride which supports me in my duties in Mincing Lane, and which enables me to resist your well-meant design of gratifying my impulses at the expense of my feelings. Shall I tell you more?" he asked, with a poor attempt to smile.

"Speak on, my poor boy; my heart is with you."

"Well, then, from having thought so much of my position in reference to *them*, I have grown to be stronger in passive endurance than you think; but I am not so strong as you suppose: you think that I can subscribe to Mr. Ryland's dictum in regard to her, and appear resigned. It is not therefore a sense of wounded pride that keeps me from Kensington; it is an act of necessity to

deny myself the pleasure you urge me to embrace. I have not nerve to venture into her presence. I could not trust myself if I did so. And then if I gave way to the temptation, I should wreck my own honour, and be more widely separated from her than ever."

"Thank you, Edward. How long will it be before you regain sufficient fortitude to meet Mr. Ryland on even terms?"

"Till we have ceased to be his debtors at least."

There was a silence. Miss Weston looked as if she was more than half disposed to speak out something pleasant, but she did not; and after watching Edward's face for awhile, she asked—

"How are matters in Mincing Lane? and when do you propose leaving Grosvenor Square?"

"I will answer your last question first. It was only yesterday I obtained my father's consent to the step. When I explained the advantages in the way of health and economy, all he said was: 'Do as you like in the matter; only let the move be made before Mrs. Graham returns.' I have heard of a pleasant rural residence a mile or

two west of Kensington." Edward hesitated now.

"That will answer admirably," exclaimed Miss Weston; "and now, Edward, about Mincing Lane?"

"Matters are assuming a more satisfactory appearance there, since the arrival and sale of the two cargoes Mr. Ryland had shipped to the firm prior to his leaving India. But for this opportune assistance, the house must have stopped. You cannot think what my feelings were at that trying period. I could obtain little or no assistance from my father, as you are aware. Bills came in; acceptances had to be met; the legitimate business was paralyzed through the crisis in monetary affairs; even Ellis, who had been so brave, sickened over the prospect; and as that money of mine was nearly gone, we seriously contemplated closing the doors. Just at this critical period the *Bengal* arrived, and a few days afterwards the *Seringapatam*. Ellis bore the intelligence to Mr. Ryland."

"'A good time to sell?' Mr. Ryland asked.

"'Better than two months ago,' was the answer.

"'You have pulled through your difficulties better than I expected.'

"'For that matter,' replied Ellis, 'we are pulled so fine that the City can see through us.'

"'But Mr. Edward Graham's money?'

"'Gone, or nearly so.'

"'Why have I not been told this? You are too close with me,' said Mr. Ryland, angrily.

"'Mr. Edward judged otherwise; or he dreaded to involve you further.'

"'What are the outstanding debts due to the firm—*bonâ fide* debts? leave the confounded railway speculations out of the question.'

"'Over 25,000*l.*'

"'What amount owing by the firm?'

"'Under acceptance of 12,000*l.*'

"'Then, according to my calculation, the concern would have been insolvent to the amount of 2,000*l.* but for Mr. Edward Graham's money. I suppose the proceeds of the cargoes which have arrived will go the same way as the rest?'

"'Hardly so! Mr. Edward does not feel justified in availing himself of the proceeds. He wishes

you to consign them to some other house.' Upon this, Mr. Ryland, showing a great deal of anger, said he was never understood by me. I had no resolution; I had fooled away my own money, and now I was going to sacrifice his. In honour, he held me bound to carry out the scheme he had laid down. The proceeds of these shipments were to go to place matters upon a satisfactory footing, if required. In for a penny, in for a pound. After this," pursued Edward, "I took fresh heart. We disposed of the cargoes satisfactorily; added 17,500*l.* to our exhausted finances, and renewed operations with a will." Edward smiled.

"What is the smile about?" asked Miss Weston.

"Ellis's pride at what I am doing in a new way of business, which I will explain to you some day."

In the course of the week a purchaser was found for the property in Grosvenor Square, and the sum realized exceeded Edward's hopes. He paid it to Mr. Ryland's account, the first instalment of a great debt. Edward wrote to Mr. Ryland on the subject. Mr. Ryland acknowledged the re-

ceipt of the money, but went no further. In the meantime, the Grosvenor Square people, including Miss Weston, removed to the residence mentioned, and Markwell paid his long-promised visit to his friend.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Oh! for a sea voyage with her!" The speaker was seated upon a stool in the private office in Mincing Lane, making a rough sketch of a steamer upon a sheet of blotting-paper. "Every man should try it before he attempts to pass *the* bridge. Once, in Madeira, I was nearly in for it, but before I went too far, I took ship to Gibraltar with my lady-love."

"And, Markwell?"

"I returned by the same vessel, in an unusually courteous mood."

"I hope you will always have such philosophy to console you."

"Oh!" rejoined Markwell, adding paddle-wheel, chimney, and imaginary smoke to his vessel, "experience does not assist one much in dilemmas of this nature."

"Mr. Ryland has sent his cab for you, Mr. Markwell," said Ellis, entering.

"Ay! I promised to accompany them to the Tower, Graham."

"You spend the greater part of your time with them," said Edward, with some pique. "When may I expect you home?"

"I shall be with you again in an hour or two," replied Markwell, "unless I am witched out of myself."

Markwell did not return for the rest of the day, so that we may conclude that he was witched out of himself. Yet if Markwell's feelings were implicated, he had the good sense to keep his own secret. His ordinary behaviour in the society of the beautiful Indian girl mystified her, and others also. Flirtation there was, of course. Ada evidently thought this pastime quite necessary to make up the sum of her daily life, and although she was willing to quarrel with her father's much-esteemed guest upon very slight provocation, she had a way of looking at him in a few minutes after, which seemed to say that little

would make her very kind. Ada's sympathies appeared more weaned from home life at this time than ever. She evidently thought Minnie was more than able to fill her place by her father's side; and she seemed merely an actress in the scene around her, and took no interest in what did not affect herself. Mr. Ryland was in a position to command good society. He was a liberal host, and the girls were an attraction. Lord Alfred Vane had renewed an acquaintance with Mr. Ryland commenced in Grosvenor Square; and Minnie's sincerity in a former decision had been tested. Mr. Ryland *appeared* to be somewhat annoyed. Miss Weston told Edward all about the rejection. He said—

"Minnie must have been to blame, or matters would not have gone so far. She will give in to her father's wishes. He is ambitious."

"Really, Edward!" but Edward was gone.

Ada received marked attention from more than one of her father's guests. To Markwell's secret satisfaction, she only proved herself consistent in

her inconsistency. Not the least reliance could be placed upon her. No one could predict whether she would be agreeable or full of whims. The varying, unsettled nature of her conduct seemed to show that she was indulging in some hidden passion. It was impossible for her to settle to any occupation or amusement; she could not sit still, or remain for five minutes in any one person's society, without experiencing—to judge from appearances—sensations of weariness, nervousness, or uneasiness. When Ada arrived in England, singular as she was, there was none of this restlessness of temperament. At times she appeared to sink into a dream, and then the intense tenderness of her face was almost painful to behold. More than once, within the past fortnight, Minnie had surprised her in tears. So had her father; but he could do nothing: he was afraid to remonstrate, or to seek her confidence. Ada had tested Minnie's character, and found it different from her first impression of it. Little things had happened which had called upon Minnie to put forth a resolution and decision scarcely to be

expected by Ada; although we know that little ladies who are well tutored, as Minnie had been, can evince a great deal of steady purpose when a strong claim is made upon their sense of right. This made Ada yet more restrained with her. At the theatre, the opera, the concert, in the parks, in their rides, Ada was always upon the *look-out* for some one. Without actually watching Ada, Minnie became aware of this fact, and in more than one instance she detected the presence of Sir George Elpingstone, even before Ada herself. In a little while, it was only necessary to look into Ada's face to know whether he was near or not. Under these agitating circumstances, Minnie, conscious as she was of the most painful passages between her and Ada upon this topic, was never deterred, even by Ada's violent display of anger, from remonstrating with her upon the subject; pleading and reasoning with a loving earnestness. By degrees, Minnie grew to exercise a moral authority over her, for which the other could not account. Ada *feared* Minnie. She dreaded to be alone with her.

Whenever she entered a room in which her sister sat alone, she expected the kind remonstrance; and conscience kept her in the hourly dread of the truth being spoken to her in a far sterner voice than Minnie could possibly use. But a crisis arrived in Ada's history.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"Why this road again to-day, Ada dear? You appear to be very much in love with it. We have gone this way every day this week. Suppose we go some other road for a change?"

Ada looked up quickly to the servant that accompanied them; then answered—

"To-morrow, Minnie; I must have my way to-day." After a pause: "What is the day of the month, Minnie?"

"It is the 15th of October, Ada."

"Oh! the Grahams live in this direction somewhere, don't they?"

"I believe so, Ada."

"Feramorz, they tell me, is changed into a dull, kill-joy trader."

"Nothing can change Edward," came to but did not pass Minnie's lips.

Ada laughed her odd laugh. It always came under excitement. Then she walked on quickly, as if bent on having her way.

Minnie did not resist, although she felt that something was wrong; that there was more than she saw in this liking for a particular neighbourhood. Feeling, under the circumstances, that a certain espionage was no crime, for she knew that Sir George Elpingstone would pursue his object with a resolute pertinacity if he had any design on poor Ada, she became more attentive than ever to her companion's movements. At length she saw, as Ada's eyes rested with an intelligent glance upon a particular residence, that the man of all others whom she had cause to mistrust was standing at the window. In an instant Ada knew that she was no longer the sole possessor of her secret; and calling deceit to her aid, she affected only now to have made the discovery, and proposed they should visit their old friend. Minnie was in dire alarm.

"We will go home, Ada. Come, dear Ada—come!" cried Minnie, in extreme agitation, and stopping in her walk—

"But he has seen us, Minnie dear. If we do not speak to him, he will think us most unkind. And you know you were once such friends, too. I do not forget," and Ada shook her finger significantly. "If you go away without a word, I shall know you are jealous."

"Insult me as you like, but let us leave this," answered Minnie, drawing Ada away with her. They retraced a few steps in silence; then Ada suddenly stopped: the dark fit was upon her, and she said:

"You will tell papa?"

"I must do so, Ada."

Ada dropped Minnie's arm.

"*You* can go home," she said.

"Dear Ada! are you mad? What can you mean?"

"I mean this," replied the Indian girl, in a resolute tone, "that unless you promise that you will not say one word to papa, I will not return with

you. I will go back to *him*. And now you know me. Ada stood for a few moments, waiting for Minnie to speak; and as the latter appeared incapable of coming to a decision, she turned back, evidently bent on putting her threat into execution.

"Ada—dear Ada!" cried Minnie, in a voice of acute misery, "I promise you—promise anything, Ada! only return with me." And she ran to her sister's side, saying, with quivering earnestness:

"See, Ada! the passers-by are observing us. Come away, dear Ada! This is too dreadful. Oh! do come, Ada! I have promised that I will not tell papa; and, Ada, we will never come this road again."

Ada saw she had the vantage ground, and resolved to make the most of it. She did not move, but said resolutely:

"One more promise, Minnie, before I move a step. You must behave differently to me. I *will* be free. I will no longer endure your watchings and counsellings. Promise, or I will do as I said."

Poor Minnie! In the open roadway, people passing to and fro, looking on and back with amused, inquiring, half-impertinent air, she had not fortitude sufficient to hold her ground. Delicacy exercised so extreme an authority, that all her good resolutions sank before its influence; and in a scarcely articulate voice, she promised all that Ada wished, provided she would put an end to so distressing a scene. Ada was yet looking towards the window at which Elpingstone stood. He kissed his hand to her. A vivid flush of emotion swept over her face.

"One moment and I will join you, Minnie." She moved quickly towards the house, taking a letter from her bosom on her way. Minnie stood horror-bound. Her colour had faded to a deadly paleness. There was a stillness in her attitude which showed how desperately confused her sensations were. A private cab was coming towards her at a quick rate. There was a moment's hesitation—a sudden pause, as the horse was thrown upon his haunches; and the next moment Edward Graham and Markwell stood by her side.

Edward's astonishment held him silent for a brief space. Then his face was suffused with a burning crimson.

"What can this mean? What is the matter?" he cried. Minnie could not speak. She pointed to Ada—to the house. His eyes followed the mute sign. He saw Elpingstone looking on with an amused face, and Ada puzzling with the latch of the gate, unseen by Elpingstone, for some shrubs concealed the gate from his view. All this came under Edward's observation in a moment. Dropping Minnie's hand, he said:

"Take care of her, Markwell," and was by Ada's side in a moment.

She was evidently taken by surprise. Still she turned a defiant glance upon her old friend. Thrusting the letter in her pocket, she said, haughtily:

"Don't frown at me—I don't like it."

Edward took her hand and drew it resolutely within his arm, saying, as he moved her away from the gate—

"We were once friends, Ada! I must exercise a friend's privilege, and ask you if you know what

you are doing?" Ada looked oddly at him, and answered:

"I suppose I am a little crazy, according to your English notions. There, you are better now, Feramorz. What a long time since we have met!"

"What is it, Ada? Come, trust me—do. Pray, tell me the meaning of this extraordinary proceeding."

"Zelica," cried Ada, looking wilfully at her questioner, "declines to fetter your business-mind with her confidence."

"Was not Zelica self-impelled to seek her ruin, Ada?"

"Yes," was the wilful rejoinder, and a blaze of passionate light filled the Indian girl's eyes with voluptuous tenderness, "but as yet my *Azim is not dead.*"

Edward said no more. He remembered Ada's moods, and saw she was in one of a thoroughly wilful sort. Not a word did Ada speak when she again stood by Minnie's side; nor did Markwell open his lips: cold, sarcastic, bitter he looked,

yet a quivering, as of inward suffering, overruled this expression.

"Are we going to stand here all the evening looking at one another like mummies in the museum?" Markwell asked.

"I like that!" cried Ada; "there's nature in you at all events. Still I don't look much like a mummy, do I?" Strange was the glance she fixed on Markwell. Very unlike a mummy looked Ada then.

"No, you don't. I will accompany you to Kensington, if you will permit my escort. I should like to have ten minutes' chat with you alone."

What could that wilful, haughty look mean? Ada watched it, looked half-afraid—then said:

"Permit your escort! Not half so true as the mummy. I hate politeness. No, sir; I shall not *permit* your escort. Had you said, I *will* go back with you, I should have permitted. We will keep our *acting* for the evening." Then turning to Edward, she said: "Feramorz, you are worth a hundred Mr. Markwells. You shall

drive me back." And she stepped into Edward's cab, not giving him time to expostulate. Whilst Edward was taking the reins from Markwell's hand, the latter saw Ada give something to the female who stood by her side, whispering to her as she did so. That something was conveyed to the woman's pocket. Edward drove back quietly in the direction of Mr. Ryland's residence, and Markwell resolved to have an eye to the woman's proceedings. He was, of course, quite ignorant of any passages between Ada and Sir George. Casually turning, therefore, now and then, in his walk, with the air of a man who gratifies a fancy rather than acts upon a definite purpose, he was able to watch the woman, who had dropped to the rear, and was unconscious of his observation. She, too, looked back from time to time. Ere long Markwell saw a biped ycleped "a tiger" coming up the road after them, and drawing near the woman in question with a very business-like air. Her hand was in her pocket, when Markwell wheeled round; and, just as the boy was taking a letter from her, Markwell laid his hand on

the lad's shoulder, and drawing him up to Minnie, said:

"I have certainly meddled in what does not personally concern me; but you shall judge. When Miss Ada Ryland was entering Graham's cab, she gave something with great significance to your domestic, which she put into her pocket. Curiosity induced me to watch the actions of your attendant; and just now, if I am not mistaken, she has deposited Miss Ada Ryland's charge in the keeping of this youth. It is for you to decide whether he leaves us unquestioned." Minnie bent a sadly reproachful glance upon her attendant, who certainly looked very uncomfortable.

"It is a letter for my cousin, Miss," she muttered; "and the gentleman had no right to interfere with it."

"Yes! for her cousin; and I am his nephew," cried the tiger, trying to get away.

"The address will easily satisfy you upon this head," Markwell observed.

"Yes—yes," answered Minnie, acutely dis-

tressed. Markwell took the letter from the boy, and then released his hold. The urchin was very indignant, and cried, dodging about—

"I will tell master. He carries a horsewhip, I promise you. Won't he fly out? oh, no! You have put your foot into it. I wouldn't be in your shoes for something," &c. &c.

Markwell handed the letter to Minnie. There was no address, and the envelope was unclosed. A fleeting glance was enough to satisfy poor Minnie that the enclosed was in Ada's handwriting. She raised her eyes to her companion's face with an expression of agonising fear.

"What shall we do? Ada will be like an enraged tigress."

Markwell did not reply. He drew his companion's arm through his, and walked on some distance, without a word being spoken. Minnie felt the silence was more than words. A large warm heart was quenching its warmth in tears of disappointment, and gathering all its courage around it. Minnie looked into her companion's face, and said, softly:

"Dear—dear Mr. Markwell." Markwell started as if he had been stung. Looking forward, he saw Edward retracing his steps. Nor had Ada left the cab.

"Look—look, Minnie. Pardon me, I cannot call you Miss Ryland. God bless you and Edward! We shall never meet again. You see them coming. What will you do with that letter?"

"Oh! take it," cried she, in great alarm, thrusting the letter upon him. "Pray, give it to Miss Weston, and beg her to decide for me. I cannot speak to papa to-night, as you know we have friends coming; besides I have promised Ada. But you will come this evening. Yes! you do not mean those dreadful words. Come to us this evening! We shall all know more by that time. What shall I do with Ada?"

"Keep her from speaking to your domestic, and dismiss the latter as soon as you reach home; if this disclosure is so serious."

"Oh! so serious—" Minnie began, when Markwell looked round and exclaimed:

"The woman has left us. This complicates the difficulty. She has no doubt gone to render an account of my proceeding to her employer, knowing that her services are not worth many hours' purchase at Kensington."

"Oh! what shall I say to Ada?" cried Minnie, in acute alarm.

"Say that she left your side without intimating her purpose, and that you suppose she had some motive for doing so." Markwell had barely time to put the letter in his pocket before Ada and Edward were by their side. Ada appeared to have recovered her spirits.

"As Edward would not deliver me up his prisoner," she said, "I came back to keep him company. Minnie, join with me in begging him to come to us to-night. Will you bite me now?"—to Markwell. "You looked as if you would before I escaped from you. Is Madeira swallowed by an earthquake?"

"I shall know in a fortnight."

"In a fortnight!" cried Ada, with a kind of sadness.

"Yes: I sail the day after to-morrow."

"The day after to-morrow!"

"The day after to-morrow. I must make my adieux this evening;" and Markwell sprang as he spoke to Edward's side, took the reins, and the whip fell smartly over the horse's shoulders.

"The day after to-morrow!" said Edward, breaking the silence.

"Most decidedly. I wish I had gone the day before yesterday; but I forget you do not know."

Then Markwell told his friend of the discovery of Ada's clandestine correspondence with the person whom they had seen at the window, and of his mission to Miss Weston. "I am in for it, Graham, and I must go through it. You see if I had sailed the day before yesterday, I should have been out of it. Now, twelve paces and the results. After all, I question if I shall sail the day after to-morrow. Do not say a word. I must collect myself."

CHAPTER XLIX.

"How must I act, my dear Miss Weston? I really do not know what to do."

Such was Markwell's greeting to Miss Weston, as he entered the room and found her alone.

Miss Weston was not a little surprised.

"What is the matter now?"

Markwell commenced his narration. It was almost amusing to notice his embarrassment. It was evident that he felt he had placed himself in a wrong position in reference to the letter, and that he would have given a great deal to have been released from it.

After hearing Markwell's story, Miss Weston said—

"Have you the letter with you, Mr. Markwell?"

"Yes: I took it from your *protégée*, apparently without the power to refrain from meddling in that which does not concern me. There is the difficulty. What am I to do? At least I must fight both of them; Ada will challenge me at once. If I must be shot, I would sooner she did it than any one else. If there is one thing on earth I hate more than another, although I seem to hate everything just now, it is being convicted of meddlesome interference in the affairs of others; particularly," he added, with a grim smile, "with *malice prepense* on the face of my actions."

"Am I to understand that Minnie has not read this ominous letter?" asked Miss Weston, handling it with nervous gravity.

"She identified the writing: no more. I wish we had not meddled with it."

"For once," Miss Weston said, "I expect that meddling, as you call it, has done good service. There seems to be no question for whom this letter was intended; and as I am satisfied upon this point, I can act upon Mr.

Ryland's authority, as he would himself. Therefore, I will do dear Minnie's bidding; and, if necessary, act with promptitude."

Thereupon Miss Weston drew two closely-written sheets from the envelope, and commenced reading. Markwell walked out of the room. This was what she read:

"If you knew my anxiety to hear from you, you would not keep me in such cruel suspense. For a whole week you have been silent, and these last three nights I have watched, and watched, but you have not come. I have been left to gaze on vacancy with a suppliant look. Does this neglect of me argue a change of feeling on your part? If so, tell me at once. Write to me, I entreat you; if you are true, comfort me with an assurance of your love, that I may drive from my heart the fears which haunt it. Do you doubt me? You need not. Have I not, in my last two letters, shown you I am becoming English for your sake? Is there anything Indian now in my language? I never thought I could have given up those old habits of think-

ing, feeling, loving; but a girl who loves deeply can change even the nature of her nature, her thoughts and feelings. Love is the poem of her soul. You must explain to me what you mean in your last letter when you say, 'that what the people about me call virtue is merely the result of temper or of constitution, of chance or of vanity, of fashion or the fear of losing reputation; and that my nature is too lofty, too genuinely *womanlike* to dispute your opinions.' Beloved—you bid me use this word—I do not understand you—I do not understand your meaning; but I have no opinion which does not guide me to see things as you wish. Oh! those beautiful hours before I left for Madeira! I loved you! I loved you! I loved you, so dearly! It was a wondrous era in my life, the birth-hour of a star. I adored it as a marvellous poem of the heart; I embellished it with all the graces my imagination could depict; I perfumed it with my desires; I coloured it with the rose-tints of loving, adoring thoughts; I subjected my rebellious reason to this ardent emotion, in order to

gratify you, and to *live* in life. Do you doubt me? Be fair towards me, and tell me—tell me your wishes, and I will fulfil them; I can live, loving you; I cannot live estranged from you. You say you are poor, and that my father looks for a wealthy lover for me; *I* am not to be sold. Little do you know my spirit. All the gold in the world could not purchase a single beat of my heart, a single ray of tenderness from me, towards one for whom I am indifferent. Be satisfied that I love you; not as a cold-hearted English girl loves, who prides herself in being a hypocrite; but as a child of southern clime, a child of the sun, whose fate, once cast to its idol, makes the present its paradise or its grave. Oh! why cannot you do as you say;—demand me of my father. He is kind now—so different from what I have known him; but I dare not meet his eye as formerly. I dare not be happy. I am afraid to weep before him. Why—why are you not near me as before? I cannot understand it—I have been told that you are evil—deceitful; I cannot, will not believe them. Poverty

is no crime; to love is no dishonour. So I argue, so I quiet my heart. I have many things to say, and yet I almost fear to say them. Write to me to-morrow. Then I will speak my mind more fully. I do not think of sacrifice; you say I do, but I do not. Your love will console me for all; do with me as you like. I cannot endure Minnie's eye of anxious love, my father's speaking face of fear. It is a custom amongst my people in India, for the bride to be reared in her intended husband's house. *I am prepared for the step you hint at.* My father would soon be reconciled. I have courage enough to brave even death for your sake. I love my friends most tenderly and truly, and the thought of leaving them gives me great pain; in the depths of my heart there will be warm tears for them. Still you shall never see a cloud upon my face; never have cause to regret loving me. I tell you so with that sincerity of feeling which springs from heart-felt emotion, and that passion which has been strengthened by solitude, by despair, by terror, and tears. I cannot write more; the time is

drawing near for our walk, and I must have this in readiness for your messenger."

"This is all very sad—worse than I expected," said Miss Weston. "Unfortunate Ada! the blight of disappointed love is then to fall upon your heart. The man you love is worthless—a mere adventurer, in spite of his rank. My poor, dear girl! your destiny, beautiful as you are, is, alas! in as far as the affections are concerned, not unlike that of plain Mary Weston. Poor Ada! had you simply loved, though erringly, it is possible that time might have eradicated the error; but now, with the belief that you are loved by him, no earthly power, with a disposition like yours, can turn those thoughts into another channel. Poor Ada! you and I must be closer friends now. You are true to those who love you, and, but for this worthless man, your love would have been an invaluable blessing to one heart. Poor Ada! what are your beauty, your grace, your desire to please, without the pliant will to yield yourself captive to his selfishness? Nothing to him."

Folding up the sheets, Miss Weston said to Edward:

"It has come. I have for some time feared it was so."

Before Edward could ask a question, Markwell returned.

"To whom is that letter addressed?" he asked, approaching Miss Weston. "Is there anything in it to excuse the step I have taken?"

Miss Weston replied:

"You are a man of honour, Mr. Markwell, and Mr. Ryland's friend. Read this." She pointed to the lines that ran—"You tell me that what those about me call virtue," &c. "You will surely prove your manliness, Mr. Markwell, by protecting Mr. Ryland's daughter from one who holds such sentiments as these!"

Markwell bit his lip.

"It is no easy thing," he said, "to be honestly and unselfishly virtuous, but in this case I will try. Pray, tell me the name of the young lady's correspondent."

Just as Miss Weston was going to reply, a

sharp ring at the door bell distracted her attention for a moment. A domestic entered with a card, saying the gentleman requested to see Mr. Markwell immediately.

Markwell's eye fell upon the card. He read, "Sir George Elpingstone."

"The man we saw at the window, Graham?"

"The same."

"The brother of Mrs. Graham—your stepmother?"

"Yes," said Edward, and asked to see the passage which had been shown to Markwell. He read it. "I must confront him. He has broken faith with me. He is now in my power. He knows I may at this moment apprehend him for embezzlement. I will teach him to-morrow with whom he has to deal."

"I may not dispute that," said Markwell, "but this affair is mine."

"Don't be detained long, Markwell. I know the man you have to deal with. There is more in this than meets the eye. You must remember Mr. Ryland in this business. Our duty to the

father's feelings is a grave one. To-morrow Elpingstone shall find I am not the cipher he conceives."

"Yes—to-morrow, to-morrow."

And Markwell went, saying to himself:—

"I really feel very much like a fool, as I always do, when I have made a fool of myself. I shall lose my temper if the man banters me."

CHAPTER L.

"Mr. Markwell, I presume?" Elpingstone said, scanning our friend with curiosity as he entered the room.

Markwell inclined his head formally enough; and said, as Elpingstone did not speak—

"Will you explain your purpose in honouring me with this visit?"

"Really," was Elpingstone's rejoinder, and the ease and *nonchalance* of his bearing were perfect, as he measured Markwell's stature with his eye inch by inch, "you must excuse me if I say you must quite know my reason for troubling you. Pardon me, if I ask you whether you have been in the neighbourhood of Kensington this morning?"

"We are there now, are we not?"

"Straw-splitting, Mr. Markwell, is a lawyer's accomplishment. Have you been at Kensington this afternoon, and did you return hither with Edward Graham?"

"I did so."

"Thanks, Mr. Markwell. Falsehood is a plebeian vice, from which you are, I am happy to see, exempt. So then, having been at Kensington this afternoon, I opine you must by this time have come to the conclusion that in taking possession of a letter by violence which you were quite aware could not belong to you, you have placed yourself in a very awkward position."

"As Mr. Ryland's friend, I dissent from your conclusions."

"But you see I choose to think as I say, and to act upon it. I hope my decision thus quietly expressed will refine your logic."

"What your decisions are, I care not. I know my duty in this affair, and I will do it." Such was Markwell's answer, and his mood was growing hard as iron, for Elpingstone's air of superiority and hauteur was not calculated to soothe him.

"Duty!" rejoined Elpingstone, with a sneer, and his blue eye flashed satire. "This is no time to arouse the sense of the ludicrous. I am never so near losing my temper as when a man tries to humbug me. Duty, indeed! inclination and self-interest would be quite as near the mark."

"Sir George Elpingstone," rejoined Markwell, sternly, "if a man's nature is honourable, his conduct will bear investigation, although externally it should happen to appear dubious."

"Enough of this, Mr. Markwell. We have had our fencing bout, and now to business. Mr. Markwell," continued Elpingstone, in a cool, resolute tone, "I request you to give me the letter you took from my servant this afternoon."

"I shall not give you the letter," Markwell answered, curtly.

Elpingstone lost his self-possession, and made a movement as if to seize Markwell by the collar. His face was pale and distorted with passion. Markwell coolly turned his arm aside, observing, in a much quieter tone than he had before used—

"You evidently err as to the individual with whom you have to deal. Ruffianism is quite out of place with me. I have told you my decision, and therefore presume it is scarcely necessary to prolong this interview."

Elpingstone suddenly recovered himself—

"As *you* please, Mr. Markwell. The results are not of my seeking. The question hardly deserves a meeting as between gentlemen. I have a great mind to prosecute you for felony."

"And show yourself as the prince of felons," cried Markwell, with stern emphasis, "and prove to society the honourable use you make of your accomplishments." He drew out Ada's letter as he spoke. "My attention has been directed to one passage in this letter to fortify my resolution of standing between you and your designs. This passage is an echo of your own words. 'You tell me that what those about me call virtue,' &c. &c. Becoming sentiment this, Sir George Elpingstone! to address to my friend's daughter—a lady unschooled in the science of fashionable profligacy—a girl, hardly yet a woman, and governed solely,

as you know, by impulse, whose mind does not see to the depths of your base doctrine."

Elpingstone looked at Markwell with a sneer upon his lip, and said:

"It is all very well for you to moralize, Mr. Markwell, on your side of the wall. It may be my turn next: we are both men. Will you give me my letter or not?"

"I will not."

"Few men thwart me with impunity. Are you tired of life?"

"Not quite," answered Markwell, with a gloomy laugh: "I hope to live a great many years yet, in spite of your hair-trigger."

"You will meet me, then?"

"I am in the mood to make a fool of myself—yes."

"'Gad, I did you wrong; I thought you would tack yourself to a surplice and claim sanctuary. You are not quite a saint yet, it seems."

"Not quite; but I should esteem myself less than a man if——"

But Elpingstone turned upon his heel, bade

Markwell good evening, and moved quietly away. At the door a note was placed in Elpingstone's hand. He opened it quickly, and read it by the lamplight. As he read, his cheek crimsoned, and his brow darkened.

"Sharp practice, Master Edward," he muttered. "Apprehended if found in England to-morrow. Well, Ada, it must be to-night, that's all."

CHAPTER LI.

MARKWELL found Edward Graham alone; but he paced the room for several minutes without speaking. Rousing himself at length, he said:

"I have been asking myself, Graham, if life has been worth the trouble of life, and whether it would not be better to be a drop of dew sparkling for an hour, and then vanishing into ether, than a human soul, conscious, languishing, suffering year by year, and evaporating at last into some undefined ocean of being, which must be full of groans if it be the resting-place of life."

"Why, Markwell, are you dreaming or mad? What has happened?"

Markwell was silent.

"Are my fears realized? Have you loved too much or hoped too long—about Ada, I mean?"

"I have, Graham," Markwell answered bitterly; "I recognised the love when the hope was dead. That was to-day."

"I cannot say how deeply I feel for you." Edward could say no more.

Any attempt at consolation would have been foolish at such a moment. But Edward felt too deeply to try it.

"Life—life!" pursued Markwell, "I am tired of going further. I am a failure. Everything I touch turns to grief or disappointment. I have energy, and intellect, and will, yet I stumble whenever I try to walk."

"Labour is one resource," said Edward, earnestly.

"Labour, Graham? I have nothing to do: I have lost my chance. Absence has weaned even the sympathies of kindred from me. I am alone."

"Stay here in London with me," cried Edward, eagerly. "Work with me, Markwell! I have thought of it. Practical usefulness is one of the secrets of personal contentment."

"I might have done as you suggest, Graham," replied Markwell, pausing in his walk, and looking fixedly at his friend. "I might have laboured in the world, had I known of a hidden sanctuary of love, whither I could always flee and be safe. My hands might have worked, had my heart been at home. When I met Ada, it was not too late to redeem the idle past. My heart was not too old to love; the hearts of the women I had met abroad were vases from which the natural perfume had flown, and which were filled with vanity, frivolity, and pleasure; with the falsehoods of the world and the dregs of sentiment. But Ada was new, new in heart, in beauty, in education, in her faults, almost in her nature. Ah! Graham, had she poured her soul into mine, lost herself in me, who knows what I might have been, what I might have made her? but it is over now. I feel better since I have opened my heart to you, and now let us dismiss the subject for ever."

After a brief silence, Markwell shook off his emotion, and observed with somewhat of his old energy of speech:

"I must not forget I have to *act* my part to-night. So come, Graham, we must see Mr. Ryland." Edward hesitated.

"Dismiss your delicacy: it is out of place now. Your pride was natural; but now your benefactor —Mr. Ryland has proved himself such—is on the eve of a heavier misfortune than the loss of wealth. Act in your own generous way towards him, and impose a noble restraint on your own sensitiveness."

"Perhaps he would mistake my conduct if I accompanied you."

"He must know you by this time. You must go with me: the strength of will which enabled you to give up your interests, must vindicate its unselfishness in *his* hour of trouble."

Edward looked up inquiringly into Miss Weston's face, who had just entered the room.

"Decide for me," he said.

"Go with Mr. Markwell, Edward dear; and Edward," she added, "take care of our friend here. He has had a stormy interview with a reckless man. If harm overtakes him, Edward,

it will be a poor requital for the life he saved in Madeira—your life, Edward."

Markwell smiled sadly, but Edward's hand was locked in his, and in a few minutes Edward and Markwell were on their way to Mr. Ryland's. There was, as Minnie had intimated, visitors at Kensington.

"Edward Graham, by all that is glorious!" exclaimed our old friend Finch, suddenly appearing from the dining-room in claret temperature, after port wine heat.

Minnie and Ada were together; the former turned round as Mr. Finch spoke. A shiver ran through her frame, quenching the deep glow which had suffused neck and face. She had evidently great difficulty in checking the tears which had risen to those blue eyes. Edward did not speak when he took her hand; but as she saw his eye for a moment turned on Ada, the full burden of the afternoon adventure returned upon her, and the shiver came again, leaving her cheek as pale as marble. Markwell approached; Ada was looking at him; he understood the meaning

of her scrutiny. Her glance was partly defiant, partly questioning. His heart was sadly sorrowful, yet brimful of a noble affection. Again their eyes met, and Ada looked as if something she had never noticed in his face before had fascinated her. Still he gazed; her wild grace, her strange beauty, had never appeared to him so attractive as now: the pulse of some new emotion gave a glow to her features, and the eye flashed with an expression of blended curiosity and pride.

"Priceless were the devotion of a being like her," said his heart; but reason wiped away the film from his eyes, and his face grew hard.

"We act together," said Ada. The hue of her face varied somewhat, and her voice was melancholy.

"I am sorry to say," observed Mr. Ryland, who had drawn near, "the character allotted to you, Markwell, is not very complimentary."

"If I must go through the dumb show of a *tableau vivant*, the character is of little impor-

tance, so that I can harmonize it with the subject."

"If you wish, I will release you from your engagement," said Ada, coldly.

Markwell looked at her, his pride and his heart fought together. He bit his lip nearly through, at last he said:

"I am quite at your service. I must keep all my engagements to-night, as this is the last evening I shall spend in England.

"A trip to the west—eh, Markwell?" said Mr. Ryland, as Ada moved away.

Before Markwell could reply, he was called away by an attendant. The host looked round the room, and his eyes rested upon Edward Graham, who was monopolized by Mr. Finch.

"Odd!" he thought: "there is something odd in this. Edward has done violence to his pride; I can read his behaviour; and Markwell is roused about something, and is not actor enough to conceal it."

"Delighted to meet you again, Edward! upon my word it is a treat: and amongst old friends

too!" exclaimed Mr. Finch. "*All* looking up, house and all, and the governor in better spirits. A rare move that of yours—the house in Liverpool commission business, and your own men travelling west. Really, I look for you to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mind my words, you could do it if you would. I told Ryland so last week. A capital host Ryland: gives me such a glass of Madeira! wonderful wine, nothing like it when decanted properly."

"All up with Slivery," resumed Mr. Finch; "lost the sewers, and bill passed; original holders of scrip made responsible. The devil to pay with Clayworth, Slivery and Co. If you have any claims upon Slivery, don't go to law with him. I will let you into a secret, Edward. Slivery's numerous progeny had very kind God-papas, they whisper; I only repeat it remember: that Slivery stood G. P. to all his children, and settled 5,000*l.* upon each of them, and invested in New York stock." At this moment folding doors were thrown open, and an effective *tableau* was presented. Finch was looking in another direction.

"The emeralds, however, Edward, are in the market," he whispered. "Slivery makes a parade of the fact. His jewel of a wife, the Lady Ann, 'you know,' has given them up for the benefit of the estate. You remember the 'emeralds—oh!' as Mrs. Graham used to call them? Shall I make a bidding for you? It won't be long, I fancy, before you may be glad to see them, 'you know.'"

But here Edward succeeded in drawing his companion's attention to the representation before them.

The scene of the *tableau* was from *Ivanhoe*, the parapet scene between Rebecca and Brian de Bois Guilbert, the Templar. Ada and Markwell were the mute performers. Ada well became the character she had to represent; her statue, above the ordinary size, appeared even beyond its usual proportions on the height upon which she stood. Her dress admirably became her Eastern style of beauty. It was of a rich amber silk, looped up with buttons of precious stones; her head was covered only upon the crown, with a gold net incrusted with costly

pearls, and her hair hung loose about her shoulders. Ada looked her speech to the Templar:

"Remain where thou art, proud Templar, or at thy choice advance one foot nearer, and I cast myself from the parapet."

With the look came the will into her eyes, as with clasped hands she extended them towards heaven, imploring mercy on her soul before she made the final plunge. Markwell, as the Templar, went through his part in a manner difficult to be distinguished as mockery, enthusiasm, or a deeper feeling, which took a theatrical air to veil emotions it could not hide, and yet struggled not to intimate too openly. In dumb show, his oath was taken; a glow of manly pride lit up his brow; he gazed as if entranced. Then the glow faded. A smile of emotion crossed the face, passing into one of derision, which the actor strove in vain to conceal. Indeed, with the struggle, his face was strangely tortured. Rebecca's eyes were intently fixed upon him, as if she was fascinated beyond the power of release. The acting, even in this dumb show, had become

intensely expressive; of a sudden, the Templar's whole being changed. Over his face burst a light of admiration, enthusiasm, almost of adoration. Rebecca's face for a moment wore a deeper tint of carnation: a flashing light was in her eye. Then the glance quailed, as the Templar's arms were raised; with renewed emotion interceding, for what? His cheeks blanched. The folding doors were hastily shut. What a mockery to more hearts than one were those sounds of applause which followed the closing of the representation!

"My poor friend!" muttered Edward. "Why should he impose this outrage on his feelings?"

His thoughts were all with Markwell. Presently, to Edward's surprise, he heard Markwell speaking in light irony near him. A lady, by whom he was standing on his return to the drawing-room, whispered something about the reality of the emotion; and her belief that she should live to see something similar, but divested of the theatrical. Edward saw his friend's cheek

burn, but Markwell, with a curl on his lip, addressed the lady—

"Does Miss Manly believe it possible that a person who has lived the whole of his man-life beneath the blue skies, within the influence of a southern clime, should feel the emotion she signifies in an atmosphere like that of England? I cannot myself believe that such a passion as love appears above ground in this land. The climate must always be destructive to it. In London, for instance," pursued Markwell, not heeding Ada, who had taken Edward Graham's arm, and was listening with an air of languor, "no sooner does the little blind god make his appearance, than he is caught, his wings clipped, a wig stuck on his head, he is dressed in a becoming suit of black, and apprenticed to a banker."

Turning to Ada and Edward, Markwell said, in a low voice, "There! it is over now. You desperately alarmed me at the close of the *tableau*, Miss Ryland."

"You have mesmeric influence," she answered. "I will never *act* with you again. I still feel that

mysterious power which you exercised over my senses."

And Ada drew Edward aside, leaving Markwell not a little confounded at her reply.

When Edward and Ada had reached the end of the room, she sat down upon a sofa. For a while she was silent; but as her companion looked into her face, he saw large tears rolling down her cheek.

"You will not quarrel again with my dear father, Feramorz?" she said, very earnestly; "promise me you will not. Swear to me you will not!"

Edward said he would promise much to give her comfort; and implored her to confide in him. If his friendship could be of service to her, she had only to test him.

"You cannot aid me, Feramorz," she said, with a faint smile. "My star points the way, and it removes me from your sympathy. But, Feramorz, my father loves you. Do not avoid him. Comfort him, and——" Here Ada paused and asked abruptly, "Do you dream now?"

"Sometimes, Ada, after toasted cheese."

Edward could not help it; and, to his surprise, instead of being angry, Ada laughed and said, in a scoffing tone—

"Sometimes? How unlike what you once were! You used to sit in the flood of a Madeira moonlight, and tell me such strange poetic things about your dreams. Sometimes, indeed! Ah! Feramorz, this ungenial clime has sadly materialized you. Do you remember telling me that, however much the necessities of daily life may distract the thoughts from a first and earnest affection, yet the spirit in the night season is ever true; that whilst the senses are in oblivion, the spirit ranges over the fields of the past, conjures the one being again into its presence, and in this communion nature vindicates her faithfulness?"

"I remember, Ada, saying as much; not perhaps the same words," answered Edward, sadly.

"What were your words? I like to hear you speak when you are looking sad."

"I said, Ada—at least I *feel* I must have said—

that although days, and months, and years may have passed since the heart of youth loved for the *first* time—although other rays of beauty and tenderness have sunned the path of life, and the object of first love be lost for ever, still, when the spirit is released from the influence of the senses, and the mortal part is in repose, we hold at indefinite periods, and in strange manner, tender communion with the object of first love; and whatever circumstances may arise to separate us from it, nothing can ever sully its beauty, and tenderness, and freshness."

"You think thus, Feramorz?" exclaimed Ada, with emotion.

"I do. Time effaces the influence of joy and grief, of trial and of ambition; but time can never blot out the traces of first love from the heart which has truly experienced it."

Ada's eyes swam in tears. She took Edward's hand in both her own, and pressed a light kiss upon it.

"You are still my Feramorz," she said, softly; "and you will yet be happy. I see it—both of

you. In your happiness you will not forget poor Ada."

These last words thrilled to the very core of Edward's heart. He could not still the quivering of his nerves. Those words in their promise of happiness to him, in their implied unhappiness for herself, affected him deeply. He would have talked on—would have drawn Ada to speak to him more openly; and he ventured so far as to say—

"Ada, dear Ada, when the object of that first love proves to be unworthy——" a lifting of the finger, a flash of the eye, checked him—"the sun is gone from the Paradise, but it is Paradise still." It was useless to expostulate. Besides, he did not feel it safe to approach too nearly *the* subject which engrossed their minds. He believed he had scared Elpingstone from his machinations. He had put in train his resolution to apprehend him upon the serious charge of embezzlement, traced out through a minute investigation of his father's accounts, if he remained in England one day more; and therefore a moment's

reflection satisfied him that he must be silent. Ada had evidently said all she meant to say, and did not wish to protract the interview. She rose from her seat, offered Edward her hand, with a native grace which was most winning, and without a word further, they again stood amongst the company.

The evening came to an end. Edward had not spoken a single private word to Minnie. From this he naturally shrank, remembering his pledge to Mr. Ryland. But he had seen her busy in her own pretty way, arranging this and that for the amusement of others; speaking to this one and that one who was not much noticed; and at every pause she revealed to his eye consternation and anxiety about Ada, whom she watched earnestly. All this he saw, and never, in their most familiar hours, did he feel more absolutely alone with her in spirit. But the pledge! Had Ada's words given a jar to the keystone of that stern arch? When the last of the guests, with the exception of Edward and Markwell, had left the house, and Ada and Minnie were about to retire, for there

was something in the appearance of things which suggested to Minnie that they had better go, Ada did not even look towards Markwell: he could not part from her so; he thought of the *morrow:* he might never see her again. Indeed he felt that the task he had imposed upon himself must separate them for ever. He must say one kind word at parting. He walked up to her, took her hand in his, and said, "God bless you and keep you!" in a low, uneven voice. Ada was evidently at a loss what to say. His manner was so earnest, so impressive, that she saw he meant more than compliment. She saw he was fixed in his purpose to say "Farewell," and she faintly echoed his farewell with the words "and you." His cheek grew deadly pale, except that upon it burnt a bright red spot. Was he ever to hear again the magical sweetness of that voice?

CHAPTER LII.

"YES! Markwell, yes! we cannot get rid of them. Is a man glad or sorry, one or other of them is at the bottom of it."

Mr. Ryland's voice was light and cheerful. He had watched Markwell's leave-taking, and had seen him still following Ada with earnest gaze through the room beyond. He hoped good news from what he believed he saw. Poor Mr. Ryland! His words restored Markwell to himself. A change came over his spirit. The real took the place of the ideal; and he said, as a sad, bitter smile passed over his lip—it did not go farther—

"I have an idea, Mr. Ryland, that our troubles are traceable rather to our own injustice and selfishness than to the caprice of women. We too often seek woman's love only to gratify our

vanity, to revel for a time in the vain consciousness of our own power. There are *some*, Mr. Ryland, who seek woman's love for very vice; who fascinate it as the serpent does the bird it means to destroy. For a little while the infatuated heart struggles with the dictates of prudence. But one deviation from the right path, though slight, leads to cruel consequences; especially when the affections are very deeply involved."

As Markwell spoke, it was evident that an ill-defined, but painful anticipation was taking form in Mr. Ryland's mind.

"Speak, Markwell—speak!" he said, in the low deep voice of suppressed feeling. "Your language suggests something wrong. Your manner gives my fear its reality."

With his head bent to conceal the emotion he could not now suppress, Markwell related, in as brief a manner as possible, what had occurred, and then placed the letter in Mr. Ryland's hands.

"It finds me unprepared, Markwell," said he. He read the letter through, with no other sign of emotion than the quivering of the upper lip.

Then his head bowed upon his chest, and tears, like drops of rain presaging the thunder-storm, fell upon the table over which he bent. He *saw* all at last, and as the storm of emotion subsided, dark and desperate thoughts arose in his heart. "The villain shall suffer for this," he said between his teeth. Then changing in mood—

"See what she might have been," he said, with keen sadness. "In my short-sighted wisdom, I hoped to train her to be a companion and a joy to me; and sought to correct her ill-regulated feelings, when they appeared, often by indulgence and occasionally by severe repression. I now look back and see that my own mismanagement has been her ruin."

The letter dropped from his hand, and as it fell, every tender thought seemed to fall with it. He rose and paced up and down the room.

For long he cried, "This man has been in my path; but all this must end. I shall no longer think of forbearance. I live to punish. Sir George Elpingstone will find me a more practised hand than he imagines, when we meet to settle this affair.

No earthly power can avert his fate." Markwell broke the silence which followed.

"I have a prior claim to Sir George Elpingstone's consideration," he said. "It matters little what happens to me. I am useless to myself and to society. Your case is different."

"No, Markwell—no. The man who crosses my path in this affair will be no friend of mine. As to his claim upon you, Markwell, you will feel, on reflection, that it is your duty to avoid a meeting with him. I, in a measure, have been the cause of your present difficulties, and your safety is in trust to my honour. When *I have fulfilled a duty too long deferred,* we will seek a little rest. Be with me early—although, Markwell, I shall not avail myself of your services at present. I could not well do so as matters stand. I know a man who will serve my purpose well. He has been a soldier, and will agree with me that the case at issue, very nearly, if not altogether justifies the stern procedure my mind is bent on. Still, come to me in the morning. There will be some papers for you to witness; in fact, I shall need your aid."

Markwell promised.

Mr. Ryland turned towards Edward, and gazed upon him with an eye of almost anxious tenderness. Edward went up to him and, with quivering lip, said:—

"Forgive me for my harsh thoughts of you, and do not think too harshly of my father for his connection with the man who has so cruelly injured you. He will meet with his deserts."

Mr. Ryland answered, with a sickly smile,—"He shall!" Then he added, "But it is I who have to ask forgiveness, Edward," and he laid his hand upon Edward's shoulder. "Henceforth as your heart would have it, so shall it be between us."

For an instant a gush of triumphant feeling swept over Edward's face. The next, he sank into a chair, faint and overpowered by such unexpected bounty. Mr. Ryland's hand still rested on his shoulder.

"God bless you, Edward," he said, "and prosper you. *She* is a priceless gift, but you have earned it nobly. You have suffered, Ed-

ward. May you ever remember that to honesty and steadfastness in right, you owe the promise of the happy future which I fondly believe awaits you."

* * * * *

On Edward's return home, Aunt Mary *saw* all, before she heard it. Mr. Ryland had been compelled to take her to his confidence to preserve her friendship.

"The cloud is rising from Alegria," she said: "we shall have sunshine yet."

CHAPTER LIII.

On the morning following the events recorded in the last chapter, Edward Graham and Markwell were early astir. They were now taking a hasty breakfast prior to their promised visit to Kensington. Never before had these two friends sat so silent together. Edward Graham's face certainly showed that an extraordinary change had come over his spirits; nevertheless, not a word was said upon the subject of such tender interest to him. An impression of some dire calamity having occurred, or being about to occur, kept them almost tongue-tied. Every moment seemed desperately protracted. The feeling *grew;* to speak even appeared unnatural. They who have been on the eve of a great trial, understand the emotion; and how *time,*

which they had never felt to pause before, seems literally to stand still. A heaviness is over the moral atmosphere, like the aspect of the exterior world when the thunder-storm is gathering. It was strange that, anxious as they were to leave for Mr. Ryland's, neither of the young men appeared willing to be the first to make the momentous step. In the midst of this indecision, greatly to the astonishment of the silent party, the door flew open, and Mr. Ryland himself walked into the room, with a disorder in his mien and a suppressed passion in his face which augured ill.

"She is gone!" were his first words, as he threw himself into a chair and buried his face in his hands. "She is gone! May a broken-hearted father's curse alight on that villain's head!"

The listeners to this agonizing intelligence seemed bereft of the power to speak or move. Mr. Ryland was again upon his legs.

"I tell you, she is gone!" he cried. "Do you not hear me, Edward? Do you hear what I say, and sit still?"

Both Edward and Markwell, recovering themselves, sprang, as it were involuntarily, towards the door, but turned to Mr. Ryland, not knowing what ought to be done.

"I have sworn," he said, "not to touch food or drink, until my poor lost child is found." Suddenly, as if a flood of light had poured in upon his bewildered faculties—light from conscience, and facts from memory which never dies—he cast his arms up and cried in piteous, imploring accents: "Not thus, O God! not thus let retribution fall! I did as this man has done. Thou sawest it; and now I too am conscious of the damning crime! Yes! I bore *her* mother from *her* home: tore *her* from her father's arms: an older man he was than I am now, and she was his only one. My God, Thou sawest it; and now Thou hast taken upon Thee to pay me measure for measure." He stood still gazing up, looking like one to whom the whole expanse of thought presented nothing but a maddening consciousness of bereavement. He again sank into a seat. There were no *tears* in his eyes, but

his face was distorted with mental torture. "It is the decree of Providence," he said; "I cannot escape from it. I was blessed until I knew her worth, and then the thunderbolt——"

"We have much to do," Edward ventured to say, "and when action is needed——"

"Let us hear particulars," said Markwell, "and then arrange our plans."

"Yes—yes! action — anything, anything to deaden that thought! I came here in fiery haste and meant not to pause a moment. Why I have done so, I cannot say. I had a thousand schemes for action. Edward—Markwell! you must act for me. I shall recover presently. Let there be no delay."

"Did the woman who accompanied Ada yesterday return to Kensington last evening?" asked Edward.

"I find she did. She had speech of Ada when she went to change her dress after the *tableau*. Then she went to her room and packed up her things, and asked permission of Minnie to remain until the morning. Minnie assented, for the night

was wet and cold, and the woman said she had no home to go to. It must have been all a plan. They left together, no doubt; for the hall door was open, and a scrap of paper in Ada's room said only: 'Papa has read my letter by this time, and he knows all.'"

"We must hasten to the house where we saw *him* yesterday," Markwell said.

"Of course," was Edward's answer; "but we had better go armed with authority."

"I waited for you to make the suggestion," rejoined Markwell.

Edward understood his friend's delicacy, and replied—

"To spare him would be an act of criminal weakness. We must call the detective police to our aid: we must not lose a chance."

An intelligent officer named Kerton was placed at Mr. Ryland's disposal, and the party hastened to the house in the Kensington Road in which Elpingstone had been recognised the evening before. Three several knocks and rings at the front door of the house in question met with no response.

A domestic of the next house said she was pretty sure she saw the gentleman's gentleman return in a cab about seven o'clock.

Kerton, after taking a sharp, quick survey of the window-blinds, wheeled off and darted round to the back of the house. Presently Edward and Markwell heard voices, and followed him. He had forced his way into the yard, and was engaged in conversation with a man Edward at once recognised as Elpingstone's servant, Marshall.

In a few minutes the detective joined them.

"The Waterloo Station," cried Kerton: "a sovereign was well spent, but we must lose no time. He has the start of us by four hours."

Markwell stopped short. With a low, sad voice he said to Edward—

"Graham, to go further with you in this business would be more than I could bear. I feel as if it would kill me; and you do not want me now. I shall return to Watchet. Intelligence will reach me there."

Edward hastened to the road, and sprang into the carriage by Mr. Ryland's side, giving the

order to the Waterloo Station. Kerton took his place by the driver.

"Tell them to drive faster, Edward. This is a snail's pace! On—on! lose not a moment, in God's name."

Edward drew up the window to prevent the rain from beating on his suffering companion. It was a cold, rainy October day. But little heed took the poor father now of inclement weather. With the soul shuddering under the heavy burden of its acute despair, exterior annoyances were unfelt; *one* object alone remained—to follow and to find his child.

CHAPTER LIV.

When they arrived at the railway station, they met with considerable difficulty in obtaining the information they wanted—namely, as to whether a lady and gentleman, answering the description they gave, had left the station in the early morning. Kerton, however, was dexterous and active in his business. After listening for a little while to the notions of the men about him, and whispering to Edward to keep his purse in his hand, its *look* did wonders, he said aloud—"Where are the women who waited in the refreshment room this morning?"

As his profession began to be surmised, his wishes in this particular were attended to, but with the delay occasioned by the arrival of a train. This Mr. Ryland bore very badly. He walked

about in the most perturbed mood, and ever and anon stared about him as if he thought everybody was in league against him, and were assisting to protract his torture.

At last the women Kerton had sent for came. He found out from the younger of the two—a bright-eyed, dapper little body—that a lady and gentleman, accompanied by a maid, had rested in the refreshment room by the fire for nearly half an hour that morning, waiting for the six o'clock train. The girl's attention had been directed to this party on account of the lady's strange face and the large hoop ear-rings in her ears. The lady talked strangely, and the gentleman seemed out of temper. She shivered as they went away, as if she were very cold.

The father's whole frame quivered with suppressed feeling.

"Now, my good girl," said Kerton, "did you not go and have a peep at the strange lady with the large ear-rings after she was in the carriage?"

The girl was silent.

"Nor a second glimpse at that handsome gentle-

man, *so* tall, who gave you half-a-crown in compliment of your pretty face?"

"Well, I did; but not to see him."

"Was the carriage a *through* one, did you notice?"

"I took no notice of the carriage; but the maid told me, when I asked her a question or two, that they were going to Southampton."

"And now what is to be done?" asked Kerton, appealing to Mr. Ryland.

"Follow—follow to the end of the earth. Your reward shall be a thousand pounds if you lead us right. Edward, you will guarantee the payment of the sum I name."

"Ten times the amount, if you will."

"Something like, this! a thousand pounds! Large hoop earrings, a trick of talking a strange language, a tall, handsome man, a lucky day for me! as good as done it! when I tracked Wyley through five counties, into the Welsh mines, and took him single-handed."

So communed with himself Mr. Detective Kerton, while hurrying their departure. An

express carriage was speedily secured, and away the father and his companions sped on their search for Ada. The engine-driver did his work bravely, but oh! to that parent heart how tardily those miles went by! His heart and brain burned; a few silent tears flowed, but they evidently yielded no relief. His lips were ever moving, though no words came. God knew whether the *parent* was dwelling on the *past*, and calling up to mind *his* flight when he gave the reins to sinful passion; comparing *his* present misery with that which he had inflicted on another, situated *then* as *he* was *now*. God knew! But this we should know, and ponder on in time: that a committed crime is never wiped from the annals of existence; that beyond the boundary of our observation and the ken of memory, "a will is here to judge," to which our present or our future life has to give account.

Southampton was reached; the first thing was to ascertain if a French or Channel packet had sailed that day. There had not, nor would a vessel leave for France until the following night.

The hotels were visited, but no ray of light obtained to guide them on their way.

"He has doubled on us," cried Kerton. "He guessed we should be sharp on him, and is back to town again, or across country from some intermediate station. Let us go over to the Telegraph office: if gone back, we shall have him, for I left an officer on the look-out, and I have likewise sent one to Portsmouth."

"As you will," said Mr. Ryland.

The telegraph was set in motion, but in vain. No information could be obtained from London or Portsmouth; it appeared as if all traces of the fugitives were suddenly lost; even Kerton looked as if his master-wit was checkmated.

"Is there not a branch line to Salisbury from here?" asked Edward.

"Yes, but he would hardly turn inland: once at Salisbury, there would be a dead lock," was Kerton's rejoinder.

"He has property to the west of Stonehenge, with a shooting box upon it," Edward said.

"A good reason therefore, as you know this,

that he should choose another line," replied Kerton.

"May he not argue that we should argue thus, and therefore foil us by adopting the improbable course?" persisted Edward.

Kerton spoke to a railway conductor who was passing.

"How long since the Dorchester train left?"

"Thirteen past nine," was the answer: "next, twenty-one past four."

"Not in time for thirteen past nine," Kerton muttered, and then, out of deference to Edward's suggestion, he said: "The Salisbury?"

"Fifty-seven past twelve."

"Thank you. Can you tell me if you remember seeing a lady and gentleman?"

"Oh! if you want to know anything about the passengers, you had best ask the newsboys. They're the 'cutest chaps about the place."

The detective found one of the fraternity, and explained his purpose to him, holding a half-crown between his fingers as he spoke. The sight of the

money polished up his memory and civility wonderfully.

"Sal-bury train, two Punch, leddy slipped stepping into carriage. Tall gemman damned, said he would write to *Times*, dirtiest line in England."

"Your cast, Mr. Graham," remarked the detective.

By the first train the pursuers were on their way to Salisbury. Oh! heavens, how it crawled! no express carriage could be procured, not even an engine, as Edward suggested, some five and twenty miles or so, and more than an hour and a half over the ground.

When they entered Salisbury, the afternoon was far advanced. The sun, which had flickered out for awhile, was sinking behind a vast mass of black cloud, which assumed the likeness of an unexplored country. The hour was drear and comfortless. The White Hart was the first house visited, and the visit was a successful one. Elpingstone and "the foreign lady" had been there, and had left in a gig, the only conveyance at hand

at the moment, not more than half an hour before. The female attendant that had accompanied the foreign lady to Salisbury had been left behind, and was to follow by the six o'clock coach from Salisbury, which passed through the village from which the gig was to be returned, a few miles to the west of Salisbury Plain.

Alone! and at his mercy! The news dropped like molten lead upon the father's heart. Edward felt scarcely less distracted.

He rushed to the stables, as if he had only to ask and have. Mr. Ryland followed him. The ostler was strapping a slashing, well-bred brown horse, of great spirit and power, whilst a young farmer was watching the operation, rubbing out an ear of wheat between his hands.

"Saddle me that horse immediately, ostler," cried Mr. Ryland.

"He ain't master's property, sir," said the ostler, looking to the young man.

"What sum will buy him? I will give any sum for him. Go and ask," said Mr. Ryland, impatiently.

The ostler again looked at the young farmer, who said:

"Tell the gentleman he is not for sale, Thomas."

There was no other horse in the stable fit for speed! What could be done?

Edward looked at the yeoman, and then stepped up to him and said:

"Can you help us? A villain has run away with that gentleman's daughter—a young girl: she was his pet: he will go crazy. I know the man to be a rascal."

"Saddle 'Fireaway,' Thomas!" cried the yeoman. "He will carry you at any pace you like, sir," he added, turning to Mr. Ryland; then rushed into the stable and fetched the saddle himself. As he tightened the girths, Edward heard him say to himself, "If it were my Nelly, now!" Then he told the ostler to run to the horse-breaker's and fetch his chesnut mare and dog-cart for the rest of the party.

Scarcely ten minutes elapsed before the dog-cart whisked into the yard, and "Fireaway" was led out by his chivalrous owner. The day was

fast declining. The rain was coming, and distant thunder foretold a night of violence.

"Every moment is precious; we have scarcely more than an hour's light," Mr. Ryland said, as he sprang into the saddle. A few words as to the road, and they were off; but not before adopting Kerton's hint to fling the lightest and sharpest lad in the yard up behind to serve as a guide. Going through the street, Kerton said to Edward:

"He scented us on his line. I thought so, or he would never have turned inland. Now he has taken to the open, we shall run into him, depend upon it, before he can go to earth." Kerton had been whipper-in to a pack of fox-hounds in his youth;—not at all a bad school for a police officer.

"How could he have obtained a knowledge of our movements?" said Edward, keeping an anxious watch upon Mr. Ryland as he dashed on ahead.

"You forget the maid was left behind. I saw her, and frightened facts out of her before we left Salisbury."

"What did you get out of her?" cried Edward,

holding with much difficulty the fiery animal he was driving.

"It seems," said Kerton, "that after some letter had been taken possession of by a friend of yours, the gentleman we left behind I suppose, this woman steals away to the baronet, in whose pay she was, and tells him what had happened. He writes a letter, and sends the woman to give it to her young mistress, and puts her up to asking leave to stay in the house for the night. After all the people were in bed, she was to see the young lady, and tell her that *he* would be ready at the garden gate at four o'clock. As the woman, from being parlour-maid, knew all about the doors and locks, they were able to get out without any disturbance. At the last moment, she said, although the young lady did not hesitate to leave, she fainted away, and she had a great difficulty to get her down-stairs. However, she managed at last, and found the baronet waiting. They were soon off, and drove away to the Waterloo Road Station, leaving by the six o'clock train for Southampton. On reaching the latter place at half-past nine, they made inquiries about

the French steamers and Channel packets, and finding that no vessel would sail until the next night, the baronet resolved to leave by a Salisbury train, and stop on the way to give the lady a little rest. However, at Bishopstoke the young lady saw us pass for Southampton, and she was wild to go back there; but the baronet said, "No, he had not come all that way for nothing. They would be safe at Wynards."

"On—on!" cried Edward, for he recollected that "Wynards" was the name of Elpingstone's shooting-box. The wind blew with increasing violence, and peals of thunder shook the air, yet the pace at which Mr. Ryland led was tremendous; the wide, bleak plain was entered, and that daring rider turning his horse upon the turf, flew over its irregular surface with a dangerous recklessness. The storm was at its height. The thunder shook the walls of the sky. The rain came down in heavy masses to the earth. And Ada! was she exposed to this? the child of an Eastern clime at the mercy of the elements?

For several miles Edward had been only able to

catch an occasional sight of Mr. Ryland. He had galloped wide of the road now and then evidently to reconnoitre some other track, but he was now verging towards them, standing up in his stirrups and pointing ahead. The storm had considerably abated, and the atmosphere became clearer. In a few minutes Edward saw what had attracted the notice of his friend, and he too pushed his horse to the utmost. A vehicle was on the road, certainly not more than half a mile ahead of them, and it seemed to contain the persons they were following. One, the shorter of the two, appeared to be looking back. But suddenly the officer, who was standing up in the cart, cried out,

"Great God! he does not see," and shouted wildly to Mr. Ryland. There was a great excavation on the side of the road directly in Mr. Ryland's way as he galloped for the main track, of the existence of which he was evidently unconscious.

Edward drew rein on the hill they were descending. He too saw the danger; but the shouts of the officer and himself were either unheard or

unheeded, and, stilled at last by horror, they gazed on what was inevitable in silent stupefaction. It was horrible to contemplate. On came the hot-blooded animal. He paused quiveringly for a moment on the ledge, then sprang wildly out, cleared the greater danger beneath, but fell on the hard road, rolling his rider under him, and lying with his whole weight upon his body. For a moment excess of horror kept Edward motionless. But ere another had passed he left the cart, and almost staggered towards the fallen rider.

They removed the body from under the crushing weight upon it, but at first there was no sign of life. After a few minutes, however, as Edward held the senseless form in his arms, a sob from out the overweighted breast revealed the presence of life.

Edward's agony of mind experienced a sudden revolution. He acted bravely now, and took every measure in his power for the restoration of his friend.

Mr. Ryland's consciousness returned—a con-

sciousness of miserable facts and unfinished labour. He strove to rise, but his thigh was broken.

"Do not think about me," faltered Mr. Ryland. "She is not far before us. Follow—follow!" He fainted. Ere he was again conscious, they had carried him to the dog-cart.

"The saddle-horse is not much injured," Kerton said; "broken knees and a scraped side, I see. He will take me on to Wynards. We are within three miles of the place. The boy will give you as much assistance as I could. You must go back to Salisbury for medical aid, and you shall hear from me before the night is over."

Edward assented to the arrangement. In a few minutes Mr. Ryland was slowly borne towards the city which he had left in such hot haste little more than an hour before.

CHAPTER LV.

So confident was Edward of the success of the detective officer, that, as he watched by the bedside of the sufferer, he started at every sound of wheels, feeling sure that Ada had arrived. So strongly was he convinced that as soon as the wayward, impassioned Ada was informed of the sad result of her father's pursuit, she would be impelled by affection to fly back to him, that he despatched a special messenger to Miss Weston, recounting the sad disaster which had overtaken Mr. Ryland, and expressing a wish that she would lose no time in hastening to Salisbury to give Ada that help of which she would stand in such need. But he listened and listened in vain. He began to blame himself for devolving the continued pursuit upon Kerton; or at least for not

starting again for Wynards the moment he had seen Mr. Ryland in the hands of the surgeon.

One o'clock came, and still no intelligence. The suspense was too much to bear. Edward descended to the bar and ordered a postchaise to be got in readiness. He then returned to the sick room, but had not left the bar many minutes when an attendant came to tell him a messenger had that moment arrived with a letter for him from the detective. The landlord followed with the letter in his hand. Edward tore it open. A rapid glance restored him to himself. Ada was safe. "Thank God!" burst from Edward's bosom, and he instinctively looked towards the suffering parent, who was now unconscious of the boon vouchsafed him.

"Shall I order the postchaise out?" the landlord asked.

"Yes—yes, directly!"

Edward now went over the detective's letter more minutely. The report was brief but pertinent. It ran thus—

"Crown Inn, Toller,
Friday night, 10 o'clock.

"HONOURED SIR,

"HORSE very lame and got on slow. Reached this at seven o'clock; made inquiries about Wynards, found it a mile on. Asked if gig and two had passed. 'No! had stopped there.' Found the lady had knowledge of pursuit, and that an accident had taken place. How she knew, I cannot tell. She was brought in here in very bad state. Not possible to take her farther. She walks about the room crying out that her father is dead, and that his spirit will soon come and seize upon her and destroy her.* The baronet *not here* — wasn't here when I came. Come directly you get this. Hard to get a messenger. People don't like Salisbury Plain at night-time.

"Humble servant,

"KERTON."

What could have become of Elpingstone? Edward's heart thrilled with fiery indignation.

* It is believed by many tribes in India, that departed spirits have on some occasions the power of seizing upon and destroying the living.

Longing to be the first to convey this joyful intelligence to the father, who now slept, he wrote on a slip of paper, "Before many hours I shall bring you good tidings," and gave it to the landlord, with strict injunctions to deliver it to his sick friend the moment he awoke.

"Oh, sir! for the love of heaven, don't go with the man who brought the letter across that dreadful common, Stonehenge and all — I am sure your throat will be cut, sir. He looks mischief."

This was said in a shaky, nervous voice by a male domestic of the White Hart to Edward, as he stood waiting for the postchaise. The speaker, usually a big man in his small way, looked the colour of the napkin he twisted round his wrist, and a foot lower than common in the daytime.

"Leastways, sir, take the ostler inside with you."

Edward glanced upon the messenger who stood near, and said to him as the postchaise came up to the door—

"Get in with me: I have some questions to ask you."

"You ain't afeard then, ain't you?" was the response, as the man obeyed the order, having evidently heard the waiter's remarks.

"Not I," answered Edward, good-naturedly, as he took his seat. In a few minutes he was on the road he had twice passed over the night before. Edward found his companion a middle-aged man, of what is called the better class of poor, but taciturn and strange. A fierce scowl was on his face, and the light of the lamps showed that his muscular limbs were influenced by a spasmodic action. No wonder the waiter of the White Hart did not like his looks. To Edward this man spoke not a syllable; and when spoken to, answered shortly, so that the former gave up all attempts at conversation.

When they reached Toller, it was five o'clock, and the day just breaking. Kerton was waiting. There was nothing further to relate. The lady was reported to be just as she had been all night, walking about, and looking so strange and wild

that the people feared to say anything to her. Edward cautiously opened the door of her room. Poor Ada! she had thrown herself upon a couch, as if crushed and lost to sense and reason. Gently Edward threw a shawl over her, and knelt down by her, and spoke her name; but she answered not; her eyes were wildly wandering about the room, and she muttered, "Hark—hark! his spirit is coming—is coming." Fearing if he roused her it would only rivet the delusion, he moved quietly away, and walked out into the inn yard, to hasten the movements of the postboy. Kerton joined him.

"When did my messenger reach you?" he asked.

"Between one and two. He had to walk, I suppose?" said Edward.

"Yes; and for twenty miles round I could not have found another man, I believe, who would have undertaken the job on such a night. Now, my good fellow," continued Kerton, calling the messenger who loitered near, "we made no terms last night; but there is a sovereign for you."

"Not a copper!" was the man's answer, refusing the offered coin. "I went over to Salisbury for the gentleman in less time than I ever done it afore, to please myself. And now I have said so, I'll go whome—whome!" the man added with emphasis, and the muscles of his face worked convulsively.

"A strange character," said Edward. "What does this mean? I have seen that man before, I am certain? Has Sir George Elpingstone returned here since you wrote to me?"

Kerton answered in the negative.

"What can have become of him? This slinking from difficulty is unlike him," remarked Edward.

"A bad conscience makes a coward of a man, some say, Mr. Graham," replied the detective.

"Not so with him, Kerton. He loves danger for danger's sake, and has lost his conscience for a long time. His absence is certainly very singular. Cannot it be accounted for?" and Edward looked around in perplexity.

"Ask Harry Norton," said the innkeeper, who

had overheard the remark, pointing to the retreating form of the messenger.

"I thought as much," Edward said.

"Shall we question Norton, Mr. Graham?" said Kerton.

Edward assented; and they walked after, and soon overtook the man.

The detective explained his purpose. With a bitter oath, Norton said—

"You *shall* know. My blood hasn't cooled yet. I don't care a hang; you shall see where the baronet is. I knows the baronet well enough, and cause. I have wanted to be down upon 'en afore, but I couldn't. Last night I got a chance."

"What is your cause of complaint against him?" Edward asked; "you may trust me. We would befriend rather than injure you, if only on account of the great service you rendered us last night. Now I remember, I think you once called at Mr. Graham's house at Grosvenor Square."

"I did, and you were civil-spoken to me then, as you were when that fool of a waiter took me

for a highwayman. So you shall hear my cause of quarrel with the baronet, and a d—d bad cause for he, 'tis." Pausing a minute, Norton said, in a sadder tone, although it was evident that sorrow and passion were striving together in his breast.—"An old tale, young sir—an old tale. I was the baronet's keeper—his gamekeeper—at Compton and Wynards, years agone: ten now, afore he squandered his property. I lived on at Wynards for a matter of three year atter, to take care of the old place for 'en, for father and mother lived there, and died there, and left Helen and I together. I promised the old folk never to leave her, for she was a tender child and never fitted to work. People said she was too handsome to work; but I did not want her to whilst I could. She was a good girl—leastways I thought so, and won't say now she wasn't, though neighbours passed her in silence, and then told me to stop at whome and watch her when the baronet was adown here. I didn't watch 'em, but I talked to Helen, and atter that I left his service, telling 'en respectful as I could, I

was her father, mother, brother—all, and to leff us alone, then I would he. I moved down here to Toller. He went on his old games, and 'ticed her off. The poor gal wrote me a letter from Lunnon, telling me he had promised to marry her, and would; but I know'd better, and atter two year an' less, she found it out. That's why I called to see 'en at your house in Lunnon. You guess how he acted atterwards."

"Yes," said Edward, as Norton paused and looked at him, "he broke his word to a trusting girl."

"It was so," said Norton, with a frown, "you have sed it in words I couldn't. 'He broke his word to a trusting girl.' That's what you gentry call behaving like a damned scoundrel as he was. Well! I got her whome to me. Poor Helen! she lived here over a year; she seldom spoke, but she wasted awful. I watched her one hour—God! how my heart was wrung—and I went out the next, and watched for he. All this last September and this here month I went over to Wynards every day, and had he comed down,

I would have lodged a charge of shot into 'en —I would, officer," glaring at Kerton, "s'help me God; but he never gied me a chance while poor Helen lived."

"Whilst she lived? Is she dead then?" exclaimed Edward.

"You shall see presently. But I may as well tell ee the poor girl died the night afore the last. Poor Helen! she said but an hour afore it was all over; it was what she wished, and she prayed for the baronet, and made me promise not to injure 'en, but to tell 'en she forgave 'en for all. And then she left me for ever."

Norton paused, repressed the deep sigh which shook his honest heart, and then resumed:—"All yesterday I couldn't settle to nothing. Towards night, as I was a standin' at the winder of my little cottage, as you and me be living, so sure did I see the man I had been watching for—for two months and more, but partickly the last two months—a-coming down the road in a gig, with a woman with 'en, who kept looking wild-like back. I ran atter, without quite knowing what

I was up to. When I reached 'The Crown,' I found 'twas a leddy in the gig sitting stone still. Dreadful she was to look at. When the baronet took hold of her to help her out, she cried something about her *poor father;* and I thought, thinks I, I *see* it all this instant. So I goes up to the baronet, and says I to 'en, 'I want you.' He turned mighty red and angry; but I held 'en by the arm, and wouldn't let 'en move, until he promised to come back to me, and if he didn't in five minutes I'd find 'en out. The baronet comed back. He blustered a bit when I ax'd 'en what devil brought him here at such a time; but when he found I was, as I told 'en, a resolute man, and his master through his own crime, he thought to come over me by fair words, and promises to recompense Helen for what he had done. A thought struck me. He should do it in sight of her, I said. He answered, 'he would;' and without another word I took 'en straight to her death room."

Edward shuddered. Norton went on—

"When he see'd how 'twas—for poor Helen

lay beautiful and young as ever I see her in her best day—he stood looking down upon her with less of the devil in 'en than I ever thought; but when he began to whimper, the black fit which had half gone out of me through his *look*, came back; for I couldn't whimper with 'en, and hadn't for many's the long day, not since I brought her down from Lunnon; and I went out and locked 'en into the room, fearing to trust myself with 'en in her company. I hadn't been out long afore he shook the door, saying, 'it was a matter of life and death with 'en to get away from Wynards that night; and if I would let'en out he would make me comfortable for life.' I thought a bit—what I had see'd that evening came up strong. I made sure 'twas a case of poor Helen over agin; and I went away to 'The Crown,' to make sure. There I heard enough to show me that 'twas nothing right he had been about; and when you come'd out whilst I was sitting in the tap-room," turning to the detective, "thinking how I was to do, and spoke out so anxious

about sending to Salisbury after her friends, I was your man, and went."

"Then you have not returned to your cottage since you locked Sir George into *that* room."

"He's there now, and so are we," was Norton's answer, as he turned in at a small gate, and walked up to a neat cottage at the end of a garden.

It was a cold, raw morning. Not a human being was in sight. The storm had left its traces all around. As Norton drew forth the key of his cottage door, Edward felt an awe creep over him.

"Come in, sir," said Norton, with a touch of bitter sadness in his voice.

Edward obeyed the summons, curbing the dread which was fast growing upon him. Norton paused a minute at an inner door; then he turned the key in the lock, and flinging the door open, walked sternly into the room. Edward followed. There was not a ray of light; scarcely did that which came in at the open doorway do more than make darkness visible. Still Edward felt

conscious, thrillingly conscious, that he was standing in the presence of a power mightier to the living than life. The casement shutters were opened, the darkness vanished, Edward's eyes rested at one glance on the living and dead occupants of that room. The poor girl, beautiful and young, lay as in sleep. But for the dusky shadows around the closed eyes, and the awful stillness, it would have been difficult to believe that she was dead indeed. Incredible as it may seem, Elpingstone was also in the room. Whether it was that the sight and proximity of the dead had aroused a new sense of guilt, and that his whole powers of action were overwhelmed by the conscious presence of his past life, mingling with its awful results before him, I cannot tell; but he had made no effort to escape, and had awaited what might come. The strong man had found that his strength was accidental, not essential, and had yielded to his own weakness. He was sitting in a rough chair, with his head bent upon his breast, and his eyes closed, looking as if he had been

suddenly surprised by sleep. His chest heaved with a sharp and frequent respiration. His hat was off: fair silky hair fell in curls over his brow. His face was deadly pale, excepting a burning red spot on either cheek, which gave some intimation of the spirit's conflict during that dread night.

"Wake up, Sir George: I have brought you visitors," said Norton.

Elpingstone started to his feet bewildered. He gazed on Edward. Face to face they stood, but neither spoke. At last, taking his hat, Elpingstone fixed it resolutely on his head, and drawing himself up to his full height, said, looking right before him, "The game is lost!" and walked unquestioned out of the room.

"I didn't mean 'en to leave us that gait," said Norton, "but somehow I couldn't stop 'en."

Edward retraced his steps to the inn, to make arrangements for Ada's return to Salisbury. His task was a very painful one, but no one could have got through it better than he. Notwithstanding her distracted condition, she yielded to

all he wished. Indeed, so entirely was her mind astray, that she was quite passive in his hands.

When they reached Salisbury, they found Miss Weston and Minnie waiting for them. Too true for hesitation, the little hand was placed in Edward's with the old simplicity, but her face rested blushing on his bosom as he pressed her fondly to his heart. Then all Minnie's thoughts turned to her poor father and poor—poor Ada! But Ada knew nothing of Minnie's tenderness and care. One hour she was the victim of the darkest despondency, the next she raved, and the next lay as helpless as an infant.

* * * * *

The reader must permit some few months to elapse before I take up the last thread of my narrative.

CHAPTER LVI.

Mr. Ryland and his daughters are still at Kensington. Miss Weston is living with them. In Mr. Ryland's case, time had operated with a healing hand. Severe as his physical injuries had been, there was no reasonable ground to fear more than the ordinary results of such a shock to persons advanced in life. That Ada had been saved on the brink of the precipice to which her infatuation led her, was, without question, a sovereign balm to the father's suffering; and the hope, throughout his lingering illness, that he might live to protect his child from further danger, and to soothe her troubled feelings, comforted him and expedited his recovery. After hovering for nearly eleven weeks between sanity and insanity, the symptoms of Ada's mental

disease subsided, and hopes were entertained of her physical recovery. But these hopes were not of long duration; for time passed, and she remained utterly feeble and prostrate. Dr. Ashton feared that her life would be but of short continuance. Edward Graham, to whom Madeira was the panacea for all human ill, proposed Ada's immediate removal thither. But Dr. Ashton said:

"No, Edward; the disease is in the mind. Climate cannot administer to it. With her there is no *heart* to aid nature. She is, mentally as physically, a mere shadow. I never saw in so young a person so utter an absence of all inward strength and comfort."

That Dr. Ashton was right in his melancholy convictions, both Minnie and Miss Weston were compelled to believe, when they witnessed day by day that with the return of reason growing anguish of mind fought against the feeble efforts of nature.

Edward was the only person who did not share in the general conviction that Ada would die.

"I remember the past, dear Minnie, when I believed every precious hope was dead in my heart. I remember how every hour was more gloomy than the last, and oppressed the pulse of life like a crushing weight."

Minnie's hand was on Edward's lips. She would not allow him to proceed, for she saw that the bare mention of his secret suffering agitated his feelings too keenly.

"Speak of dear Ada, Edward. Do not recall the past. The veil of our tears is over it. Have you indeed hope for Ada?"

"I have, Minnie;—if she could look out of the present and see any comfort in the future, if she could be got to hope at all, and to seek higher sympathy than we can give. I verily believe all would go well if she would but *talk*, Minnie! Her heart is with that man. Had he died in faithfulness to her, she would, I really believe, have burned on his funeral pyre to attest her devotion, could she have had her way. Her disease, you must see, is one for which medicine, or care, or nursing affords no remedy. It is an

ailment of the soul and the imagination—the imagination even more than the heart, Minnie. Pray get her to *talk* about the past. It is the silence which alarms me. If you could cautiously open her eyes to the truth, she would be saved to us: because her pride would come in aid of nature."

Minnie had so much confidence in Edward's judgment that she prepared herself to draw Ada on to talk about what had been. But she must watch for the right opportunity. One day she sat, as usual, watching in Ada's room. The best flowers which the early spring afforded brought the hope of summer into that room. The once beautiful Ada reclined, as was her wont, during the day upon a sofa bed. She was wasted almost to a shadow; her eyes were closed as in sleep. The windows were concealed with waves of yellow damask drapery, which gave a sort of summer twilight to the room. Minnie had concluded reading some pretty passages from "Longfellow's Hyperion," when to her surprise she saw large bead-like drops coursing each other down her suffering sister's

face. Minnie knelt down by her, took her hands in hers, and well remembering what Edward had said about prevailing upon her to talk, she said:

"Cannot you bear to think about it yet, darling?"

Ada looked up: she seemed to see nothing distinctly. Her eyes moved with a sort of bewilderment from object to object; but when they encountered Minnie's anxious, tender gaze, it seemed as if something deeper than memory stirred within. Her eye lost its wandering look: it softened as with pathetic, earnest emotion: and taking up Minnie's hand, she pressed it to her bosom, and said faintly:

"Is it not pity which induces you to bestow such care on me? Were I as I used to be, strong and well, would not you turn from me in disgust? Would you not—all of you—cry *shame* upon me for the disgrace you call it in this land, which I have brought upon you?"

Minnie answered quickly, with a glow upon her cheek and brow—

"No! Ada, dear love—no! no! We know your nature. We know how strongly you were tempted. We have only love and pity, Ada dear; that kind of pity which means only love in tears. Not the pity, sister darling, which we feel for a little child when it is ill, and dying; but that sort of pity, Ada, which we have for *ourselves* as we reflect that we are not nearly equal to what we should be, or what we were designed to be, by Him who bears with us through all, with his own gracious pity, giving us days, and months, and years, and sometimes holy thoughts, and beautiful visions of what might be, and will be some time."

"Your words are like sweet music, Minnie; speak to me about anything you like. I am in darkness, and would have died in darkness an hour ago; but your words waken a faint desire for light in me. I hardly know what I mean."

Minnie still knelt by Ada's side; and began to talk about the painful occurrences prior and subsequent to the listener's mental eclipse. Her *mind's*

endeavour was to show poor Ada the precipice on which she had stood; her *heart's*, to draw her to itself, that she might feel comfort, rest, and confidence.

"There are spirits, Minnie, sent, at stated periods, abroad over the earth to harass and torture those who are unfaithful to their plighted word," said Ada, in a whisper, looking strangely fearful as she spoke.

"The only spirits which harass and torture us, dear Ada, are those born of acts which we commit contrary to right and reason. Fear not, dear sister, no spirit will torture you for regretting an error." Minnie ventured on this last remark rather doubtingly; to her surprise, Ada said nothing in vindication of herself, but remarked with a faltering voice—

"If your pity for me is as you say, do you not pity *him?*"

"His heart is evil, Ada. The good you thought you saw in him was a delusion of the senses." Ada replied very sadly:

"How was it that I did not see what you say,

before that fatal day? I do not understand myself. I could not help what I did, Minnie."

"Your passion, Ada dear, impelled you to contemn all warnings, and to disbelieve in all evil consequences."

"And it has swept my life away in darkness." This was all Ada said, and her eyes closed again. For hours she lay almost without a sign of life. Even when she revived a little, she seemed unable to answer the tender inquiries of those anxious watchers. A new light had been thrown on poor Ada's state of mind through this conversation. It was clear that the pride of her impassioned nature was one source of her affliction. Pride has its heart, as well as passion. She had had her pride fostered through the tender admiration always lavished upon her. And now that she became aware that it had been cruelly hurt, she had not, so it appeared, sufficient energy to tend those wounded instincts of her nature, but let them lie throbbing and bleeding in her breast. Minnie thought their great care must be to restore her to confidence in their love.

And she was right. Love was Ada's empire: but sadly as it had been trampled on, her being was more paralyzed in the bruised and prostrate tenderness of that love than the sudden overthrow of the fairy castles it had so enthusiastically created.

Once in the evening of the same day Ada looked up and asked her companion if *he* had been at Kensington, if *he* had wished to see her, *if*—" but she could go no further, as she saw the answer in Minnie's face.

Poor Ada! who could tell the suffering of her proud, tender, impassioned nature. To these traits—beautiful in refinement and when under the authority of prudence—were added those mysterious superstitions which gave a meaning and a value to the most insignificant circumstances. She could not be dealt with, therefore, like a girl of ordinary education or habits of thought. She was removed from the understanding of those to whose affections she was endeared. Poor Ada! no wonder her father wept silently to observe her forlorn and desolate con-

dition, and argued the worst from the calm character of a despair which shunned human sympathy, and brooded in silence over itself.

> "Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
> Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

We all feel that the affection which links us to one we think we are shortly to be parted from for ever, is almost more than earthly. We feel that another of the few joys left is folding its wings; and its plaintive accents of "farewell" disenchant once more the mind of its confidence in its own hopes for the future, and bids us remember that daylight is dying in the west. A change had come over the spirit of the afflicted Ada. Her nurses thought it a sad one for them, although, perhaps, a happy one for her. For some days after Minnie's conversation with Ada, the latter had maintained a profound stillness. Minnie scarcely ever left her side, but she feared to draw her to speak against her will; therefore she worked or read in silence by her side. But the change came on the 14th of March, Ada's birth-

day; the torpor of silence rolled off the afflicted mind. It had been debated below, on the previous day, whether notice should be taken as formerly of this event. Miss Weston thought not, and so did Mr. Ryland; but Minnie overruled their opinions with a modest positiveness, which was quite convincing from her.

"Ada attaches," she said, "a very great importance to the observance of this day. It was always a grave business with her, one of her prettiest superstitions. Even 'Nep,' you know, was *given* a birthday last summer, and was ornamented with a wreath of flowers, and she dressed a dinner for him with her own hands. And now her own birthday is near, she may think her feelings slighted, unless we show her that we remember it." And Minnie had her way. Ada's memory had been faithful to her in this particular. Her superstitious mind had evidently speculated upon the subject during the night, and when Minnie entered the apartment in the early morning, the strange steadfastness of Ada's recognition of her, satisfied her that her surmises had been

correct. Ada had left her bed at a much earlier hour than usual. The morning sun was shining into her room, and, to Minnie's surprise, she was dressed in white, with one of her beautiful Indian shawls drawn round her; her couch was at the window, and on it she was now reclining. As Minnie drew near with her offering, a choice bouquet from Alegria conservatory, a sweet sad smile stole over Ada's wan, pale features, and, opening her arms, she tried to raise herself, saying:

"Minnie—dear Minnie! my sweet kind friend and sister." Minnie clasped poor Ada to her breast, then sank down upon her knees by her, and wept, for her fortitude was gone.

"You remember it," were Ada's first words. Then she said, in an emphatic whisper: "I felt it coming, a vision of its meaning came to me in the night, came in a whisper of the mountain wind, from my native land; my mother's voice said in my ear, 'We shall be united soon, death is the inheritance of birth.'"

"A dream, dear Ada. You must distin-

guish between what is vision, and what is reality."

"But she was here, and may not a dream be a reality?"

"Your mother is with God, Ada dear, and He is everywhere," said Minnie, gently.

"I did not see Him with her, she was alone. Is *He* everywhere?"

"Yes, Ada, He is over all, the heavens, the earth, near though far away, the Father of the erring and the good."

"I do not know, I have not thought, Minnie, whether, had I been taught as you have been, I should feel as you do. But, Minnie, I saw all I say, and felt it in all my being. I saw it all," continued Ada, in a low rapt voice, "and heard it. My mother rested by a fondly remembered spot in my native land, and called me to her, and said as I have said; and, Minnie, I shall shortly join her now," and forth from the feeble speaker's lips burst that hymn which Minnie had heard once before, but in a lower key, the shadow of the former voice, yet thrilling and expressive. Minnie

was not frightened now. Over her whole mind came the pure, fervent resolution to speak of truth aright; and as she knelt by Ada, when the last words of that strange tongue had ceased, *her* prayer, simply the Lord's prayer, arose in a low gentle voice. It seemed to charm the evil spirit away from Ada, for she wept—wept as she had not wept for months, then hung upon Minnie's neck, and asked, with quivering earnestness:

"What is it which seems for the moment to bring light and warmth into me?"

"It is God, Ada, the soul of love:" such was Minnie's answer. She could not say more, but she took Ada's hand in hers.

"Speak, Minnie—speak on."

But Minnie, heart-wise little comforter, was silent, only pointing to the bright sky above, and smiling a sweet smile of rapt emotion up to it. And Ada gazed too—those strange eyes, so dark, so wild, and so expressive, were upturned into the flood of sunlight, and rested gazing.

When Ada saw that her companion was observing her with tender interest, she took both Minnie's

hands in hers, and resting her head upon that faithful breast, whispered:

"Strange, that with the belief that death is near me, the dead weight upon my heart seems gone. Talk to me, Minnie; bear with me, sweet sister, a little while. Speak words of comfort to me if you can."

And Minnie talked on, of love, and faith, and prayer; and Ada's frail fingers wandered amongst Minnie's golden curls.

There was a silence. Minnie's heart was too full for words. The stillness was broken by Ada. "But for him I loved *too* well, you would have directed my steps in the right path long ago. As it was, I was jealous of any influence coming between me and him. I feared in my secret mind to think he gave a thought to God, because it came between me and his love."

"Hush, Ada dear!" exclaimed Minnie, with earnestness, "for human love to live, divine love must give it life."

"Ah, Minnie! had I been taught as you! But you know something of what my early life was.

The wild scenes in our Indian home; my mother's paroxysms of insanity; her austere and constant devotion to the religious rites of her caste, to soothe the demon she believed to be haunting her; her death; my loneliness for a time; the sudden change of life; the first impressions grown almost indelible; thus," said Ada, dwelling with tenderness upon her listener's thoughtful face, "thus was I taught; and thus my own wild nature was left in reality to its own impulses. I knew of no directing power, only my own instinctive sense of right and wrong—no silent monitor I have heard you speak of—indeed the little I knew of our Indian worship, and which you think so wrong, was used by me to confirm the authority of impulse; therefore I felt I was getting, when I had lived awhile with you, as obnoxious to myself as to the quiet conscience-governed hearts around me. Then can you wonder that I was compelled to fly to *him*, who had promised to bear with my unhappy wilfulness, and to turn it to devotion?" Ada had overtaxed her strength, and nearly fainted; and Minnie blamed herself for not being more careful.

But it was so rare a boon to hear her poor sister's voice, that her selfishness was very natural. When Ada had revived a little, she said, softly:

"Do you understand what I mean by the authority of *first* impressions?"

"I understand you thoroughly, dear Ada. When my thoughts go back to early days, to a time when I could scarcely lisp a prayer, when I was barely the height of the chair I am sitting on—for I was such a wee tiny thing, Ada dear, when I was eight years old—the first thing which rises up on my vision is that little room at Alegria, in which prayers were read morning and evening. That little room was set apart for devotion alone, and I think of it now with a love and reverence far beyond what I feel for any other of my childhood's haunts, even the sunny garden with its flowers, though in some way *they* are intermingled with those feelings."

"How different my first impressions!" Ada said, very sadly. Then drawing Minnie close to her side, she added, in a voice of singular gentleness,

"Minnie, would you take me to that little room

you speak of? Do you know, Minnie, I think you have shown me a little light; and if I could fancy myself the little child you were, and kneel where you knelt, Minnie, and heard you pray for me, I think I might live long enough to root out my *first* impressions, and leave in your mind a gentle memory of me."

To this proposal Minnie could not reply in words. Her answer was a fond embrace. She now felt that her beloved sister was no longer isolated from Him to whom she had so long prayed for mercy upon her, and to her Ada was, if possible, a thousand times more endeared than ever. There was scarcely a film of the old cloud between them now.

With a sedate gladness, Minnie reported what had passed to her father; he listened earnestly, yearningly, whilst the tears flowed silently from his eyes. He could not resist the impulse to go straight to Ada's room. He sat down by her, and kissed her pale brow with deep emotion.

"My child—my child! will you not live for your poor father?"

Ada wept. She gazed into her father's face

with eyes in which the old love seemed sublimed by the purity of the new. As he drew her to his bosom, she said, falteringly:

"Papa, how good you have been to me! how thoughtful for me all these years! and yet your wilful child would not read your care aright. Yes!" correcting herself, "I did in a measure, but it was not pleasant always to act as you wished, and I was wilful, papa. I now look back upon the trouble I have given you, but I cannot wash it out. How bitter a thing it is to see we have done wrong, and not be able to make atonement! Do not weep, dear papa, it is I who should weep my life away; but dear papa, I have not always been wilful. Often, often has my wayward disposition urged me to conduct quite opposed to my real feelings, and I am sure I have not a cruel, nor an unkind heart; I am sure my nature is not bad; still how badly I have behaved to you! Pray—pray, do not weep! My sorrow will be a pleasant memory to your kind heart, when your poor Ada is no more. Forgive me, father," she exclaimed, suddenly rising with an effort nought but the wild

energy of the spirit could have given her, and, throwing herself at his feet, she gazed up beseechingly into his face. The heart-wrung parent could not speak, his lips moved, but no words issued from them. He took his kneeling child in his arms, placed her on the sofa, and then, burying his face in his hands, wept without control.

Ada's influence was now an enchantment of a different kind from what it had been. Unutterably dear was her Indian sister to Minnie. Apart from affection, and yet blending with it, was the charm of being able to sweeten the cup of bitterness for one we love.

The next evening, as Minnie sat alone with Ada, and Edward had just left the room, Ada began to speak of what Minnie had hoped would never be revived again.

"Dear Minnie," the afflicted girl said, with her cheek resting on her hand, and on her face was that look of sorrow which comes up out of an abyss of stinging recollections of dearly expiated error and ill-subdued love, "I am so grateful to Edward for what he has told me. He did it so gently,

so sensitively; and awoke my pride with so manly a sympathy, that its influence is as if it had half restored my heart to life. O Minnie! how peculiar is the memory of the heart, when the worst has befallen, of things which passed before without a thought being given to them! On that dread morning, Minnie, when we fled from London, I knew my father was near, was pursuing us, and yet *his* laugh was in my ear—*it* has sunk deeper now."

"How could you know my father was pursuing you?" Minnie asked, guardedly.

"No sooner had I left the house, Minnie, than I knew he was on the track. My nature knew it. How, I cannot say; and when I told *him* he laughed. Then when I saw my father's face, as we stopped at a station, and he was borne by on his pursuit, the shame I felt as I saw he was going to Southampton in vain!—and still *he* laughed. Then the hastening away from Salisbury, and the shame still, as people looked curiously at me! I could have sunk into the earth. And then the storm, the howling of the winds, the roar of thun-

der! I did not feel the old freedom of mind to revel in nature's night; but cowered down in fear and trembling. Then the clearing up of that storm, the fiery, angry sky, the looking back through that impulse of the conviction that my father was still upon our track, *his* knowledge of it, and *his* oath as we saw that furious horseman tearing over the plain towards us. And then the fall! and when I strove to cast myself headlong from the chaise, *his* harsh words, and then *his* laugh again as I told him I was sure my poor father had been killed. And after that, deserted in that lone inn! And then, Minnie, that *death-room!*" pursued Ada, shuddering. "Poor Helen, beautiful, and young, and dead; and *he* the cause. Her death saved me; *he 'had lost the game;'* ha!" For a minute those dark eyes grew wild and flashed with the spirit of old; but Minnie's hand was placed gently upon them, and her kiss quieted the throbbing brain.

"And I loved him so," poor Ada said, sweetly and simply. "My heart was all his. I would have expended my life for him, without a thought

for myself as long as I knew he loved me. But I know not how it was, we had not been together long before I felt a creeping over me of disgust of myself, and fear of him; and yet I loved him. I love him still, Minnie. Sweet one, do not sigh. I never wish to see him again: but, Minnie, if you were I, you would feel as I do."

"You must not think of such things, dear Ada; indeed you must not, or I must say good-night, and run away."

"Ah! Minnie," answered Ada, as her eyes sank, and the long dark lashes fell over them, "'must not' are easy words to use, but hard to obey when the heart cannot forget. You, Minnie, will never know how hard. Over your beautiful love there is light, and truth, and honour; but a cruel man—and yet I love him, Minnie, the love itself is a tender cruelty, a beautiful cruelty, Minnie—has struck a fatal blow at all that was of worth to me; and I have not strength to take my mind from out its misery. I do not seek to nourish this feeling; only, as I say, it seems beyond my nature to turn away and close the door

of my mind. I would give much to forget for the brief season left to me, to open my spirit to your desires; but the mere effort to do so is sure to bring all back again with redoubled force." And as Ada now looked into Minnie's face, the strange, intense emotion over her countenance showed how dangerous, how despotic the memory of the heart was to her impulse-governed nature. Love, in her ardent soul, had immortalized its birth and death, and the mysticism which she had inherited from her mother seemed to add to its force.

Minnie once more sought to draw her suffering sister's mind from the painful contemplation.

"You remember, dear, your request about Alegria? Miss Weston has been down there to-day—Alegria belongs to her, you know—and she has ordered everything to be put in readiness: the flowers and Nep (you remember the dear fellow), and Roger and Teaser, and all; and she has told me to kiss you, and to say, with her love, that Alegria and its inhabitants will soon be ready to receive you."

"But you must go with me, Minnie," pleaded Ada, very earnestly.

"Of course, dear Ada. I wish to be Minnie of Alegria once more. I must be always with you. I could not live happily a day away from you."

"And Edward, Minnie?" said Ada, quite seriously. "I must have him with us also, for we should not get on well without him. You see how poor papa looks for him. Will he really go with us? You cannot think how very grateful I feel towards him for all his tender goodness. Oh! Minnie, when he sat by me to-night, and said so much which was *good*, without preaching to me, saying, he was once more impulsive, more wilful than any one on earth, more so by far than I thought myself, but that he had overcome some of this evil, and that I should be able to do much more than he had done, it was such music to me, that I felt, in spite of my great faults, there was some virtue at my heart's core yet."

Minnie's old sensitiveness when Edward's name was mentioned had not yet vanished. A some-

thing at such times came up to beautify the beautiful; and the curls invariably fell, hiding the glow of her cheek. Minnie answered in a little whisper—

"He will come and see us, Ada. He calls Alegria his home: and mamma Weston will live with us, of course. When you *learn* mamma thoroughly, Ada, you will understand that she is the *presiding genius of Alegria.* Her mind is so unselfish, so pure and good—dear mamma!"

"Yes," returned Ada, after a little silence; "but she is grave to me, and her words and manner *school* a little; and, therefore, she does not touch me as you and Edward do."

"Hush, Ada! we are so inferior to her. She is the oil to the lamp of our little goodness; and if she is grave, Ada dear, the spirit of true virtue is often so, not in itself, but for the unhappiness and evil it cannot change. Mamma's heart is of this virtue, and we should reverence it, Ada."

"I do not know exactly what you mean," Ada said, in a very thoughtful way, "but I think it is *young* nature which meets and attracts the

sympathy of the young. My heart feels confidence in its presence, which it does not feel with the experienced. The fruit was first a blossom, Minnie, and there was no worm at its core then. To me, Minnie, you are the presiding genius of Alegria."

Minnie allowed her sweet patient to have her way, for she felt a wondrous delight in listening to the fancies of a mind which was growing cheerful and which held forth a spring-promise of the coming summer in spite of the dark winter it had passed through—should I not rather say by help of the dark winter it had passed through?

Alegria was soon visited; on an April day it was. May came and went, and June followed. The season was mild, and teemed with bounty: light and warmth fell upon all creation. The flowers opened their eyes, and lived in their looks, and the birds sang their songs of joyfulness; and Ada, although the link that bound her to life was very slender, little by little became conscious that past trials had not quite blotted out the possibility of future happiness. The hope, so frail at first, at length grew strong, that she

would be spared to bless those hearts that loved her with such a yearning tenderness.

I have been favoured by Markwell with the perusal of a letter addressed to him by Edward Graham. The date of this letter, and the tone of its opening remarks, intimate that an exchange of intelligence had taken place prior to the time at which it was written; and I said as much to my friend Markwell; but he answered, although he spoke in a much more buoyant, heartsome mood than common since his return to Madeira:

"I shall explain nothing to you. Read the letter if you like; but don't suppose that *I* am going to accede to Graham's proposals."

Thus admonished, I opened the envelope, and, thanking my stars that Edward Graham had taken the trouble to write distinctly, read as follows:

"Alegria, Eling,
Aug. 7, 1849.

"My dear Markwell,

"I wrote you a long letter in the beginning of last month, but on perusing it a few days afterwards, I consigned it to the fire instead of the

mail-bag; partly because I arrived at the sage conclusion that it is unwise to meddle with the lees of a past grief. Having hinted at good news, I will not keep you in suspense. Dr. Ashton's fears in regard to Ada—he maintains that your constitution and hers are the most singular he ever met in his life—have not been verified; and we now indulge the hope that she will live to be a comfort to those hearts which her nature so strongly attracted to her and to which her more recently developed virtues and graces so tenderly endear her. When I wrote to you in May last, we all thought that she would soon be removed, but she is restored to us, chiefly, as she says herself, by the love and tenderness of one whom for me it would be out of place to praise. You know whom I mean.

"We *feel* that she will live now, although physically she is scarcely the shadow of what she was. I cannot tell you, Markwell, how she *looks;* that would be impossible. The sweetness of her smile, as she welcomes us to her side, the evenness of her spirits, the tenderness of her manner, give

to her delicate Eastern style of beauty an expression which language cannot express. Minnie is ever by her. Ada says it must be so; for she then feels that an angel is at hand; and you know I am almost of Ada's opinion. You will perceive, by the date of my letter, that I am at Alegria, and you must not be surprised if I now and then get extravagant. I am writing from my heart. This is the place to live in.

"The old squire appears to grow young with years. Mr. Ryland and he are great friends. He spends almost every evening with us. The Lovells and we are like one family. Generous ideas are nature's strongest relationship. There is a closer union of heart formed in three months, among the men of nature, than in twenty years among the men of the world.

"You can now think of your old friends of Vigia in their English Alegria. Ada says she can never leave this place; that she feels more secure here than anywhere else in the world: and her father, knowing that my good Aunt Mary is to live with *us* in something less than six weeks, and

that I shall be compelled to reside nearer London for the present, offered to purchase Alegria for Ada and himself.

"'Sell Alegria!' Aunt Mary cried; 'money has no power over it,' and she moved about quite regally.

"'What is it, dear mamma?' a little lady said, gliding up to her, and putting her arms around her waist.

"'Your papa, Minnie, wishes to buy Alegria!' exclaimed Aunt Mary, with indignant, yet with almost tearful emphasis.

"'We will *lend* it to Ada, and papa. I am sure Edward will agree. We cannot sell Alegria; but lend it, mamma—yes!'

"'*Lend* it—yes, with highest pleasure. That is quite another matter. Let it be so, Mr. Ryland, I entreat you; that is, if Edward consents.'

"And then, after my consent, Markwell, had been solicited with all gravity and propriety, and obtained with a grace befitting the occasion, Mr. Ryland apologized for his proposal of purchase, and expressed suitable obligation for the loan.

"You see the dreamer, the cross-grained, impulsive invalid is turned into the plodding trader, and calls himself happy. You ask, how can this be? Simply, Markwell—and I take this credit to myself—because I have voluntarily suppressed the fanciful in my nature, and stepped with a resolute heart into that path of labour which circumstances called upon me to adopt. My present tone of mind is the product of a combination of well-intentioned efforts. 'But are you leading exactly the life you would choose?' you ask. I answer you in the words of your old friend Sydney Smith. 'I am resolved to like it, and to reconcile myself to it; which is more manly than to feign myself above it, and to send complaints by the post of being thrown away, and being desolate, and such like trash.' Happiness of spirit seems to me to be the mind's silent tribute for the graceful good things (and everything which administers to our secret confidence of content is graceful) which are always gathering around us. To the eye of reason this content of spirit has a gleeful sort of worldly wisdom

about it too. The world is a beautiful world, Markwell; and you must again look upon it as you used to teach me, when I was so sadly in need of the comforting voice of common sense.

"Again a few words upon the old topic of your joining me in Mincing Lane. 'Graham and Markwell?' What say you to the idea now? If you would *try* it for a year or two! The work is really very simple—so simple, that I fear you would try to complicate it, if only to tax your own energies and resources. I have again gone over all your arguments against the scheme. I regard your remarks about living in England as wholly improper; I am proudly conservative and English-like in this—I believe that England is designed by the all-guiding Deity to accomplish grand ends. I cry heartily, Huzza for old England! say what foreigners and *foreign* Englishmen like. The glory of the old country is ever green. Now once more, Markwell, I—I, Edward Graham, invite you to a life of usefulness. Your health is fully re-established; you have no right to play truant from England any longer. What

is it I ask of you? Why, to become a useful member of society; to become, in fact, an English merchant. There is nothing unworthy or degrading in the undertaking; nothing to deter a person of the greatest ability, learning, character, and taste, from engaging in it. On the contrary, as the proper management of a large mercantile concern requires prudence, generosity, firmness of will, and consistency of character, he who does his duty therein deserves, and will receive, credit as well as emolument for his reward. Action in the arena of the world is the salt of human existence. Useful employment stops the career of time, and prolongs the duration of existence. To think and to work, is to live. Our ideas never flow with more rapidity and abundance, or with greater gaiety, than in those hours which useful labour redeems from idleness and dissipation. A man is never so frail, so weak, so unable to resist the pressure of morbid and physical ailments, as when he is isolated from his fellows. He who isolates himself from active life, isolates himself

from healthy life, and becomes a misanthrope and a burden to himself; but, by honourable labour, the tone of his mind is heightened, the scope of his enterprise is widened, and his sense of importance in society is matured and confirmed.

"In fact, Markwell, I believe, — and I will speak to you in the words of an eminent politician, in order to give weight to my opinion,—that the commercial profession is as capable of being pursued with intelligence, honour, and public spirit as any other; and when so pursued, is as compatible with purity and elevation of character as any other, and as well entitled to the honours which a community bestows on those who adorn and serve it. You say, 'Look at your man of commerce. He undergoes great labour and anxiety to gratify his ambition, to increase his store; he reaches beyond his early ambition, he becomes a man of fortune. He retires from active life; and then the product of these years of anxiety and labour — is it happiness, heart-content, and peace?' You fear not. You think that he pines for occupation; that his life of

indolence is rapid and uninteresting; that money-anxieties have soured his temper, and deprived him of all taste for those rational amusements and enjoyments which were, in a certain abstract degree, the prospective lure of his success.

"My answer, Markwell, is—that such a man as you adduce never knew the value of rational amusement and enjoyment; their correcting, softening, charitable tendencies: he never valued them nor partook of them during the years of his commercial pursuits; his sympathies were cold, and buried in the figures and forces of the mechanical occupation; for he had not adorned labour with the grace of that heartsome, genial good-will and liberality of mind and purse which alone can make any occupation worthy. I agree with you that the rustic villager may be a sounder philosopher than he. The experiment, in the sense of your argument, is made *too late.* Such a man as you instance comes not within the range of a really sound conclusion on this topic. He had become too much the machine of habit to bend, at so late a period

of his existence, to the influence of a taste which refines and humanizes the sympathies. This taste, Markwell, is not created through any active or passive mode of life. It must be always in the heart and in the understanding; it must go on with life, hand in hand with the material scheme of occupation, to preserve the mind from selfishness and vandalism, from harshness and censoriousness. To a man who labours with a generous mind in his commercial avocations, there is a practical outlet through which the undue thirst of gain evaporates; which purifies the sense of growing riches, and returns it to the sympathies with a glowing sense of personal congratulation. To explain: an authority, for instance, is peculiarly delegated to the men who are engaged in practical life, such as the merchant, the manufacturer, and the agriculturist, to regard with interest the welfare and respectability of those who are connected with them in their labours, without whose aid they could do nothing. Enough is not thought of this authority. It is not made to harmonize with

prosperity as it should. The employed, who strives to do his duty, has a claim on the employer beyond the mere money compact. When worthy, he should be the recipient of the employer's confidence, kindness, and counsellings judiciously offered. The hand should be open to relieve his wants in times of sickness and need. By the observance of this duty, a new bond is formed between the master and his people. True charity reacts on the heart of the giver: a reality of good fructifying seed of benevolence.

"Such, in my mind, Markwell, should be the private career of the merchant; such the conduct of those engaged in commerce who are industriously concerned in weaving the mighty net-work of mutually beneficial exchanges which enwrap the world. Such should be the behaviour of manufacturers and agriculturists, in the place of hardening their hearts against their people, and fattening on the ignorance and distress which they know, but do not care to improve or heal. Have I shown you how you may combine humanity and money-making — commercial pur-

suit and enlightened, heartfelt generosity of conduct?

You ask me to tell you something of our Kensington household. Time has, I am happy to say, done much to soften the asperity of my father's feelings; but his health is very bad, and, therefore, he has relinquished all thought of ever sharing in the labours of the business with me. Mrs. Graham stayed in Paris many months longer than I expected. She has been home for some time now, and remains a great deal at home, as she is not quite reconciled to the retrograde movement in her fashionable career. I should not be the least surprised if she prevailed upon my father to remove definitely to Paris. I can see such a plan is in her mind, and somehow, I scarcely know how it is, she generally manages to carry her point.

Now shall I say a few words about matters in Mincing Lane? Ellis often asks after you, and Seebright maintains that the wind always blew from a fair quarter when you entered the counting-house. Ellis pays you the compliment

of saying that when you sat upon his stool and talked *so*, he could never make out whether you were in joke or earnest.

"I must not forget to tell you that the business thrives. After some difficulties in a monetary sense, assignable to causes I need not explain, and which would have been fatal to our operations but for Mr. Ryland's liberality, affairs have steadily progressed towards the hoped-for position it is my aim to reach. I have made a change in the *disposition* of business, and it has worked well. Heretofore it had been the custom of the house to dispose of the return cargoes of the raw material to those concerns which were, if I may so express myself, the trading medium between us and the consumer. I have now broken through this system, shortened the distance between us and the legitimate purchaser, and, in consequence, the latter is able to sell a necessary commodity at a reduced price, and the business of the house has certainly increased twofold.

"There must be more work you say. Yes! I am aware of that; but they who desire to succeed in the practical affairs of this world must not

fear work. Success, or the hope of success, is its payment.

"Do I love money? you ask. No, Markwell, not for the sake of making it a passive idol. Money is not, beyond certain necessities, essential to happiness. In fact, money when obtained at the expense of liberty becomes the source of real misery. But you must remember what I have to do: Mr. Ryland's repayment, and within the specified time, if practicable. I would prove to him, if I had no higher motive, that I cannot impose upon his unbounded confidence. An annuity to my father must likewise be provided from the business; and I want money still, not because *might is right*, but in order to possess the *true* might to crown the right. In fact, now I am in *harness*, I am not at liberty to eschew my position at will; and, indeed, as I am disposed to think that habits and inclinations become rules to life, I may find it at a future day difficult to burst asunder those bonds which now bind me to the practical. 'Reason is choice,' Milton tells us; and although the sense in which he speaks this emphatic truth may not be exactly

applicable to my case, yet I cannot help thinking that my 'choice,' being by necessity the behest of duty, has 'reason' to uphold and dignify it. These are the convictions which support me; and you cannot think with what a vigour of purpose and aim I am fired through them. And when I have made 'self' my friend rather than my master, as you see it is just now, I believe I shall be capable of doing nearly all I aspire to do.

> 'Meanwhile revive;
> Abandon fear: to strength and counsel joined,
> Think nothing hard, much less to be despair'd.'

"You think I am a little too enthusiastic for cold, practical life as it is. I fancy I see you exalting that huge brow of yours and saying, 'Common sense and worldly experience affirm that whoever attempts to grasp what is far beyond the usual reach of mortals, commonly finds himself precipitated at last like Icarus in the fable.' Then about happiness and contentment, if you are in your grave mood, I hear you say, 'Neither occupation, skill in arts, nor gratified ambition yields happiness; for it owes its origin to those

good qualities in human nature, in which even the illiterate find it—to prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude and fidelity. The boast of happiness without these is but the rant of pride, or the rhapsody of inexperienced speculation.' I take off my mental hat, Markwell, to the idea I have spoken for you; nevertheless, I like the enthusiasm too.

"Now, Markwell, the last word shall be of self, because I like to finish a letter with a surprise. You are conscious that I am not yet so robust as I could wish to be. With care I got through the past winter pretty well, but a little spring hunting, and a great deal of spring wind, gave me a keen preception of my infirmity, and struck, like an acute critic, at my weak part. However, like good criticism, that probe perhaps will be of service. It showed me the reality of my condition, and I shall avail myself of the hint in time. My purpose, then, is to spend another winter in Madeira. Minnie has something, too, to learn and to do in Madeira—to visit your Madeira Alegria, with the knowledge of its having been her birth-place; to visit the strangers' burial-

ground, finish *our* partial work, and pay her own heart tribute to the sanctity and interest of that spot. Therefore, I shall require of you to procure for us, if possible, the occupation of Vigia; to secure our old servants and horses too, as *they* know our ways; and, above all, when the November packet enters your roadstead, to come off to us with the same gay heart you greeted me with on the morning of my happy introduction to you. Then—and you will occasionally be *our* guest—we will endeavour to show you the way in which we very earnestly hope to carry Alegria about with us. I must now say good evening to you. I have prolonged my chat, incurring that monstrous impost of 3*s.* 8*d.* for my double letter; because it is a real pleasure thus to enjoy your presence notwithstanding the seas and mountains which separate us. But now, with the warm hope of finding you all we wish, I will once more assure you I am,

"My dear Markwell,

"Yours very sincerely,

"Edward Graham."

"P.S.—Why will you give any thought to Sir George Elpingstone? All I can hear of him is this, that after the *Times Gazette*, so graphic in its home truths, announced him to be in the list of outlawry in February last, he retired to Wiesbaden, married, on the reputation or rumour of wealth, a sprightly widow, committed a sad blunder in so doing, and, to use Mrs. Graham's words, 'I have a disagreeable suspicion that George, once the most elegant and graceful of volant men, is becoming vulgar and coarse; but he goes next month to shoot, with all the honours of the thing, with the Duke of Brunswick.'"

After some five years' absence from England from the period at which I had an opportunity of perusing the letter I have introduced into these pages, I was tempted one fine summer morning, having learnt in Mincing Lane, on the previous day, that Mr. and Mrs. Edward Graham were at Alegria, to pay a visit to Eling. To accomplish my design agreeably, I left London at a very early hour. On the way, my thoughts

were occupied by curiosity, interest, and, to a certain degree, by apprehension. I could not plead ignorance of *some* changes in relation to friends whose career had greatly interested my sympathies; nevertheless, I was in ignorance of how these changes affected the *well-being* of the individuals in question. Therefore, on this bright summer morning, as I reached the village of Eling, and entered the paddock gate which admitted me within the precincts of Alegria, my feelings were fluctuating and undefined. I had forborne to ask a question in the village touching the occupants of Alegria. I had met on the road Bill Daring, the old Squire's huntsman, or first whip, airing the beautiful pack of hounds of which his master was so proud, and learnt that the brave old gentleman was still hale and hearty, and I met a groom, besides, whom I knew, exercising an animal of Arab blood, at the sight of which my cheeks glowed; and then another, a stranger to me, with a couple of horses, perfect-looking hunters. As I cast my eye over them, I thought of happy times, and "Tally-ho;" still

I eschewed inquiry from one and all about my friends; having resolved that what I wanted to know should come of itself, a glad realization of a hope, or—what I would not admit as possible yet. As I moved down the carriage-way to the house, on either side I saw that the old spirit of care and cleanliness was at work; over all there was the air of a genuine English home, a quiet household look, telling me more plainly than language that there was still a presiding good genius within Alegria, loving home well. The lawn was in beautiful order; the roses around were never seen in greater perfection. I almost looked for Nep's bright eyes in the bushes. But now one object as I drew on, over all the rest, enchained my observation. It was a mass of the Madeira convolvulus, embowering the windows of the *little room* about which Minnie had spoken so feelingly to Ada on the day of Ada's great trial. The window of this little room opened to the lawn. Some delicate trellis-work had been run round it to support the creeper; and the plant was now in full blossom, radiant. They

who are acquainted with the delicate ethereal blue of this glorious flower, will understand how beautiful it looked. I could not resist the impulse which led me to take a nearer view of this lovely blossom before I presented myself at the front door. Not a person was near. The sun, the birds, and flowers alone had as yet welcomed me to Alegria. I found the window of this little room open, the white lace window curtains blending with the convolvulus which trailed about and around. I had not advanced more than a few steps, before I heard what appeared to be a general move of many people from the room, and the door close. Then I went still nearer to the window and heard a low, soft voice, thrillingly earnest, repeating a child's prayer. As the curtains fanned by the light breeze opened, I saw before me the tall, graceful form of a lady, bending down over the most lovely baby-boy eyes ever rested on. He was kneeling before her, his little hands folded, and looking up into her face with a glance of angelic seriousness:

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look on me, a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to thee."

Such were the words spoken by that lady, and spoken so gently, so thoughtfully, so sweetly, that I *felt*, in watching the expression of the child's eyes, that there was a sense of worship already forming in that pure and tender mind. The word "simplicity" appeared to be too long for the dear boy, and he mangled it prettily in his child-speech, but the rest he echoed in sweet clear tones. The lady turned her head—yes; I was right in my conjecture. It was Ada! My friendly fears were all dismissed; my hopes were more than realized; the picture said that trial had developed the better nature, and that religion in its soft and soothing influence had at length got near enough to trail its bright flowers round Ada's heart and mind. It unveiled the secret of Alegria.

A few minutes, and then a happy, pleasant group of welcoming faces was around me. I held that lovely boy, with his foreign look and

cherub face, in my arms. He was indeed the perfection of childish beauty and grace. He had his mother's eyes:—the long, silky, black lashes swept the cheek almost.

Proud must the father of that child be!

"Can you tell me your name?" I asked, presuming on our rapidly progressing intimacy.

"Graham Alegria Markwell," was the dear little fellow's answer, and he looked confidingly up into his mother's face, as she leant forward with parted lips, glowing cheeks, and the rapt air of a guardian angel above him.

THE END.

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